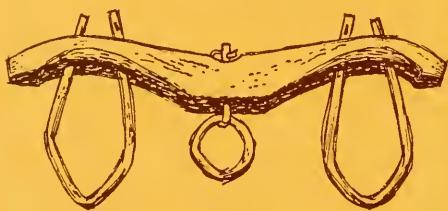




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# **THE BURDEN BEARER**

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# THE BURDEN BEARER

AN EPIC OF LINCOLN

BY

FRANCIS HOWARD WILLIAMS



PHILADELPHIA  
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TO MY WIFE



**BOOK FIRST**



# THE BURDEN BEARER

## BOOK FIRST

### I

Of sturdy English stock the Linkhorns came,  
People of Norfolk, seeking in the new  
For what the old denied,—a human right  
To labor and to worship in God's world  
Untrammeled save by conscience and the fear  
Of one sole Maker.

So John Linkhorn came  
To plant his crops in Pennsylvania soil  
And gather fruit beneath Virginia sun;  
And after him came Abraham in turn,  
Migrating to Kentucky's distant fields;  
And after Abraham, Thomas,—he whose ways  
Were never thrifty, though his heart was set

To cozen fortune whose averted face  
Shone never on him. Slow of gait was he,  
Stoop-shouldered, pausing ever for a jest,  
Hard-handed, capable of labor, nor  
Striving to shun it when it came his way,  
Though scarce alert to seek it out.

His friends,—

And he had many,—called him Shiftless Tom,—  
Tom Lincoln, who could make a joint at need  
And do such carpentry as few could match,  
Yet all unlettered. Patient at his bench  
Within the shop of Joseph Hanks he wrought,  
And saw the months glide into years and all  
The years to bootless issues. Yet a web  
Was being spun about his life to lead  
To undreamed destinies. For Tom saw oft  
His gentle cousin, daughter of the man  
Who paid him his scant wage. And Nancy's eyes,  
Resting at first complacent on the gaunt  
And stooping form at Joseph Hanks's bench,  
Little by little took a softer light  
And conjured up strange images whereof

They two became a portion. And at last  
He spoke, all awkwardly and ill at ease,  
Fashioning his untaught phrase to tell his love,—  
Unlettered, rough, yet eloquent. And she  
Quite understood and loved him that he failed,—  
Quite took into her heart his futile trial  
To make his plea a poesy; and so  
She gave her promise to become his wife.

Time's wheel turns slowly, but at last the day  
Set for the marriage came, and Jesse Head,  
Exhorter, preacher, and the friend of both,  
With ceremony due made these two one  
In eyes of God and man.

And Nancy faced  
The stern reality of coming trials  
With faith which knew no faltering.

Sweet was she  
In all the winning ways of womanhood,  
Too timid haply for the turbulent stress  
Of stern and rugged days. Within her veins  
The blood of those who once serenely dwelt

In English Malmsbury flowed inviolate,  
And something of the mystic Stonehenge hung  
About her presence. Soft and vagrant winds  
Whispered their earliest carols to the child  
Who knew no struggle till a ruthless world  
Startled her sense and dashed her striving life  
Against the hardships of the pioneer.

Through tears that told the pain of parting shone  
The light of girlish eyes, and from her gaze  
Faded Virginia hills, as in her mind  
A vision of the far Kentucky rose.  
And soon the perils of the journey came,  
The Wilderness Road with all its hidden fears,  
The bruit of savage Indians and at night  
The iterant cry of wolf and wildcat, raised  
As though to stem the Western flowing stream  
Of active life, grown milder at the hearth  
Of human kindness. Thus did she come  
To live and learn and to each daily task  
To bring her willing effort. Thus her face  
Took on the look of patience, and her eyes

Turned serious, even as our fancy paints  
The eyes of Mary when the angel came  
To make annunciation. For mayhap  
A prescience whispered to the guileless one:  
“The day shall come when thou shalt bear a man  
To carry high the torch of liberty.”  
How evermore inscrutable is fate!  
How evermore implacable the scales  
That weigh life’s happenings! A timid bride  
Came Nancy to the cabin of the man  
Whom she had wedded, unafraid yet frail,—  
Alas! too frail, to cope with those hard days  
Which now became her lot.

For Tom had made

A hut of rough-hewn logs, with earth for floor,  
Windowless, bare, and open to the blast.  
And here he brought the wife whose daily toil,  
Faithfully given, of recompense had naught  
Save scanty food and clothing, and the leave  
For brief respite in weary slumber. Here  
Was born the little Sarah, all too soon  
To droop and seek again the kindly earth,

Leaving the fragrant memory of her smile.  
Then, in the discontent which often breeds  
A hope of future betterment, these two,—  
The shiftless pioneer and his fading wife,—  
Moved onward to a little settlement;  
Men named it Buffalo, on Nolan Creek,  
Meandering through the blue Kentucky fields.  
Close by the cabin bubbled one clear spring,  
In cool seclusion, from beneath a rock  
That kept it ever shadowed; so they named  
The new place Rock Spring Farm.

And ere a year  
Had seen the little family settled there,  
A mystery seemed to brood upon the house;  
And on a day God called a soul to life,  
And Abraham Lincoln lived.

## II

Haply the dawns  
That press their wan cheeks on the uncumbered hills,  
Nor fret upon the angled works of men,

Bring yet a finer essence to new day  
And bathe the spirit in a rarer joy  
Than those who dwell in towns have dreamed upon.  
So loving Nature's compensations keep  
Her scales at balance, and for us who seek  
To see in retrospect those rugged days  
In the gaunt wilderness, there is strange joy  
To think upon the vigor and the life  
Which from the first imbued that infant form,  
And through the tender veins of him whose fate  
Enwrapt America, poured vital strength  
To build at last the stature of a man.  
Patient the mother was, as true the wife.  
The first rude learning which to Thomas came  
He gained from Nancy's hands. So, too, the child,  
Turning from infancy at the mother's knee,  
Was taught to read from the scant printed page,  
And gathered lore of holy men of old,  
Ever more thoughtful with the growing years.  
Of schooling nothing worthy of the name,  
Of preaching little, save when some lean man  
Came hungry on his circuit through the wilds,

Pronouncing with thin lips the living word  
And in grim mien and manner setting forth  
The stern necessity of struggle here  
Or misery hereafter. 'Twas as though  
Fate hung a hopeless veil before the child,  
Who evermore sought shelter in himself,  
And as he learned to work, learned also well  
To hoard the hours for study. Then there came  
The move to Knob Creek, and again the change  
To friendlier soil in far and fallow fields  
Wrung by hard toil from Indiana's huge  
And overshadowing forests. Gentryville  
Became the new abode, forlorn and bare.  
A cabin rough-hewn, into whose rude logs  
Had bit the hatchet of that seven-year boy,  
Laboring each day beside his father, reared  
Its inhospitable unlovely shape,—  
Haply a shelter but no whit a home;  
And here each evening closed a day of toil.  
Ah, who that dwells in curtained ease can know  
The stress of those stern pioneers whose hands  
Wrought out the miracle of a Nation's growth?

Who, fashioned in the large luxurious mold  
Of this our day's prosperity, may dream  
How Nature's face a century ago  
Wore frowns where now she smiles?

Hard, hard the times,  
And grim the struggle for existence waged  
In those far settlements, those outer posts  
Where Thomas Lincoln and his fading wife  
Wrung a bare living from the grudging soil.  
Meagre their fare and their utensils few,  
Their raiment scarce above the garments made  
By silent squaws in the red Indians' tents;  
And if perchance the mother's patient hands  
Wrought homespun clothing, 'twas for Sunday wear,  
Above the daily uses of the farm.  
So Abraham, the child of such hard days,  
Grew into youthful stature, garnering strength.  
At night he sought the fitful glare of logs  
Burning upon the hearth to con the lore  
Of Thomas Lincoln's Bible, or to find  
In Bunyan's allegory food for dreams.  
The *Life of Washington*, a precious part .

Of the slim stock of books, was evermore  
An inspiration and an upward call  
To a soul bent on duty. Nor the least  
Of these prized helps to gropings of the mind  
Was that loved book of human tinctured rimes,  
The poems of Robert Burns. So evermore  
The earnest boy, after the hours of toil,  
Fed his young mind and built his seeking soul;  
And so the years sped till there came a night  
When Nancy Lincoln reached the end of care,  
And, folding her thin hands across her breast,  
Whispered a blessing in her husband's ear,  
Looked with a mother's lovelight in her eyes  
On little Sarah and on Abraham,  
And, with a sigh, passed out into the light.

### III

How doubly solemn is death's whisper heard  
Through the green aisles, the lonesome sacristies,  
Of the primeval forest! Rude and plain  
The burial of Nancy, with no word,

No sentence spoken, and no voice upraised  
In solace or in song. And Abraham grieved  
And brooded long on such a sore neglect,  
Till, hearing that one David Elkin rode  
To nearby settlements,—a man of God,  
Itinerant preacher and exhorter he,—  
He wrote beseeching that some service meet  
Be rendered at his mother's humble grave;  
And David traveled o'er the weary miles  
On horseback to the cabin, and from far  
About the country silent neighbors came,  
And gathered at the grave, now grown with grass,  
Beneath a stately sycamore; and there  
A sermon preached, a hymn sung and a prayer  
Hallowed the ground where Nancy Lincoln slept.

Less prompt the foot of toil to meet each day  
The daily strife, when at the heart there tugs  
The sorrow of a parting. Yet the task  
Waits not upon the pleasure of the man,  
And so the father and the son toiled on.  
And little Sarah childishly essayed

>

A woman's labors. Abraham, between  
The hours of heavy work upon the farm,  
Sought how to add to their too scanty means,  
Doing such service as he might, perchance  
Splitting the rails for a far neighbor's fence  
Or ferrying some traveler o'er the stream,  
Content with what he got, the while he gave  
A conscientious measure for his wage.

The quiet evenings were in study spent;  
The boy, intent on education, strove  
To garner fruitage from that arid soil,  
And prospered so that soon the neighbors said  
He had become the oracle of law.

At Jones's store the Solons of the place  
Discussed the politics of State and town  
And wrestled with the problems which their lives  
Made very real and earnest. When the court  
At Boonville held its session, Abraham came,  
Listening with admiration to the pleas,—  
Returning to his cabin then to dream,  
Through the long silence of the sombre nights,  
Of legal tilts and tourneys and the joy

Of swaying men by brilliancy of mind  
And all the force of logic. But at home  
There was scant comfort. Son and father felt  
The need of all the thousand ministries  
Of woman's hand. Neglected were the chores  
Of the poor household, rusted and ill-kept  
The homely vessels of the kitchen shelf,  
Unmended the mean clothing. 'Twas perchance  
Rather necessity than sentiment  
Which spurred the elder Lincoln to make choice  
Of Sarah Johnson as a second mate;  
Yet was the choice most happy, for she proved  
As noble as affectionate, as wise  
As she was tender. And her stepson grew  
All soon to love her from a heart as true  
And crystalline as Nature.

When again

The struggling family in fair Illinois  
Sought an amended fortune, she who brought  
Her little store of household goods to fill  
The ever pressing needments, carried too

The sunshine of her soul to that far home  
To soften every hardship. Abraham now  
Feeling the hour had struck that he should seek  
To make his own place in a wider world,  
Engaged with Denton Offutt to bring down  
A flatboat to New Orleans, loaded deep  
With such provision as should find a sale  
In that great mart. 'Twas there his quick eyes found  
The many avenues to giant trade;  
'Twas there his nature turned in sudden shock  
To see the flesh and blood of men bid off  
Like chattels at an auction. With what mad  
Grief and wild indignation did he cry:  
"By God! if ever in the days to come  
I have the chance to strike so vile a trade,  
I shall strike hard!"

Ah, wondrous prophecy!  
Sublime forecast of a sublime event,  
To give our wisdom pause!

The country store  
At primitive New Salem scarce could give  
The inspiration for a destiny

So great as Lincoln dreamed. Yet mid the stress  
Of that rude life he found the dreamer's hour  
To fashion visions in his spacious mind.  
Then came the Black Hawk war with quick alarm  
To summon men to action, and he went  
Undaunted by the meagreness of means,  
A poor equipment of a frontier town.  
With what strange interest does our thought revert  
To that rough camp on the Rock River's banks,—  
A camp which unto us of later days  
Seems history's microcosm; for its lines  
Enclosed, in comradeship of soldiers' lives,  
Zachary Taylor, Robert Anderson,  
Immortal Lincoln and—a name less blest—  
Jefferson Davis; mounted rangers all,  
And all as brave as hardy. When again  
A respite came from Indian alarms,  
The many-sided man put by his arms  
And, as postmaster of his little town,  
Gave honest labor for a meagre wage.

IV

Anne Rutledge! What a perfume seems to haunt  
The syllables of that mellifluous name!  
Imagination dwells upon her face,  
And fancy wreathes her form in symmetry.  
Slowly both face and form became a part  
Of each day's dreaming of the earnest youth,  
And Abraham Lincoln knew the deepest love  
That ever in his heart made melody.  
At night he glimpsed her eyes among the stars,  
And in the twilights he repeated soft  
The verses of a song which seemed to hold  
The essence of her being. But too soon  
Fate passed a subtle hand across her brows,  
And she was fallen on sleep ere yet the joy  
Of love had reached its ripening.

Lincoln knew

Alone his bitterness, nor made loud moan;  
But those about him saw a shadow creep  
In darker emphasis to mark new lines  
And write its message on that virile face;

And ever after in the deep-set eyes  
Dwelt the strange pathos of an untold pain,—  
The mist of unshed tears.

To the small home  
Had come the stealthy tread of Death to claim  
The cherished form of Sarah, and once more  
Father and son looked on a new-made grave  
Beneath the whispering trees.

And Abraham wrought  
With still redoubled vigor at his tasks,  
Haply with hope to dull the edge of grief  
Upon the unchanging round of daily toil.  
Surveyor was he, boatman, rail-splitter,  
Builder of rough-hewn cabins. In the woods  
A wielder of the axe, and in the fields  
A tiller of the soil. Yet all the while  
He delved amid the precedents of law,  
Studied the commentaries,—the debates;  
Not seldom brought the logic of his wit  
To bear upon the issues of some feud  
Among his neighbors of that countryside,  
Till people came to him for argument,

And afterwards for justice, and the folk,  
Finding him ever jealous of the right,  
And all unbending to mere policy,  
Bowed to his will, and called him "Honest Abe,"  
Nor questioned his decisions.

So the man

Became the politician in a sense  
Worthy of all approval, and appealed  
To fellow citizens for proof of faith  
In his staunch loyalty; and at the polls  
They showed their faith, and sent him to the halls  
Of legislation at Vandalia.  
  
So, in the early manhood of a life  
Rooted in rugged nature, and upbuilt  
Amid the strenuous ways and days of toil,  
Came Abraham Lincoln to the open door  
Of statesmanship. And we who, looking back  
Down the perspective of the vanished years,  
May mark the epochs of a great career,  
Are conscious of an exultation born  
Of knowledge that within that open door  
Stood the sublimest fruitage of the time,  
To adorn the annals of America.

V

Honor that oft doth seem too coy to list  
The lofty wooing of a noble mind!  
Fame whose blown hair and sun-illumined eyes  
Not always bring their glory to the dreams  
Of worthiest seekers; ye are hovering near,  
To touch with eloquence a lagging pen  
And fling new radiance o'er the historic page.  
A new career hath opened to the man  
Whose mind accepted destiny the while  
His hand wrought out his own.

His steady eyes

Had fixt their questioning purpose on the words  
Of prophecy and promise,—had indrawn  
The spiritual essence of the sacred text,  
And winnowed meanings, symbolisms, truth,  
From the large utterance of inspirèd lips.  
Within the ample storehouse of his mind  
Were garnered phrases of an import rich  
In comfort to the soul, and through his heart  
The melody of love, vibrating, kept

Its unabated sway. From Avon's source  
Of wit and wisdom flowed the exhaustless stream  
Of wide humanity, touched by the hand  
Of art inimitable, and upon its breast  
Floated rich argosies, which the seeking mind  
Of Lincoln seized and fed upon, and throve,  
So grafting beauty on the stock of strength,  
That perfect manhood should at last bloom forth,  
Life's ultimate fruit and flower. His studious ways  
Held him aloof from many a social scene,  
Yet left him time for civic duties, deemed  
The prime commands, laid on an honest soul.  
From Blackstone, Kent, the elementary law  
Was slowly made his portion. Physics soon  
Became his study. Manly, gentle, true,  
He grew to be the master of such speech  
As made him Nature's orator. His style,  
Concise and clear, simple, and more than all  
Marked with the Anglo-Saxon nervous force  
Which makes a sentence vital and a phrase  
Undying.

Now there came a further call  
To serve his State in legislative halls,  
First at Vandalia, then in later days  
At Springfield, whither the gaunt giant rode  
On a poor borrowed horse, and owning naught  
But saddle-bags, three law books and such clothes  
As poverty might claim.

His good friend Speed  
Was waiting, and to him the traveler came  
Asking the cost of lodging, and, when told,  
Turning in sad and melancholy plight,  
Saying: "I have not wherewithal to pay,  
But if you'll let me share your room, I'll make  
My credit good by Christmas." So the two  
Lived in the humble quarters, and the town,  
From that time forward till the crowning year  
Which summoned Lincoln to his high estate,  
Became a patriot's home.

Now did the law  
Absorb his every thought; the Federal courts  
Drew to themselves the talent of the State,  
Which, sparsely settled with a hardy race,

Yet furnished matter for continual feud  
At bench and bar. The court-house, oft of logs  
Though sometimes framed and boarded, bore small  
trace

Of the robed majesty whence precedents  
And legal cues were drawn. The judge was placed  
Upon a platform of unsightly boards,  
Raised to lend dignity where oft, alas!  
No dignity abode; and at his side  
The clerks, on comfortless unstable stools;  
And on the benches, further down the room,  
The patient jury. It were hard to tell  
Why, in the rude and restless days which then  
Filled out the passing year, the people found  
So great attraction in the court-house, yet  
It seemed the Mecca for all seeking minds  
To journey to, and, having found, to keep.  
Fitted to diverse needs, it held the place  
Of lecture and of theatre, or the scenes  
Of nightly revelry which Eastern taste  
Turned to for respite from a world of work.  
Riding the circuit had its hardships then,

Yet knew its compensations. Oft, perchance,  
Adventure seasoned travel, and the men  
Who rode together, making light the way  
With joke and sally, fording swollen streams,  
And sleeping in mean quarters, met in fierce  
And wordy opposition at the court,  
Intent to snatch, each for his client, all  
That might be got by pleading, or the wit  
To make a jury laugh.

Such men were they  
Who, humble then, were giants when there came  
The stress and strain of war. The names stand large  
On history's page. Logan, the partner, friend  
And counsellor of Lincoln. Douglas, he  
Whose burning eloquence was yet to thrill  
A Nation and touch wide the fount of tears,—  
He whose supreme invective was to meet  
The solid sense and humor of that man  
Who conquered through simplicity. Bissell,  
Stuart and Baker, Trumbull, Browning, all  
Intent to carve out fortune, though the world  
Stood with averted face. Now the campaign

Which carried the first Harrison to fame,—  
“Log cabin” hero first, then President,—  
Broke into wordy fury, and the Whigs  
Knew no more valiant champion than he  
Who spoke but by conviction, and so held  
Respect of enemy as love of friend.  
But not alone did politics enthrall  
Or civic duty bind him. For there came  
From Lexington to Springfield Mary Todd,  
Young, witty, ever ardent and withal  
Disposed to arrogance in claiming suit  
Of many brilliant suitors, and to her  
Lincoln made court; and soon the vixen Chance  
Threw in the way of both the hot-blood youth  
Of James Shields, who found grievance in a jest,—  
A paper satire born of Mary’s pen,—  
And made demand for satisfaction. So  
Lincoln, whose chivalry was of the sort  
Which acts nor mouths its presence, stepped before  
Her anonymity, and bore the blame,  
Accepting challenge, and, while loath to fight,  
Refusing naught which honor might demand.

Then Shields was satisfied, and Mary felt  
Her first light liking ripening into love  
For one whose gaunt form held a knightly soul.  
Then, as October glories turned to brown,  
These two were plighted, nor postponed for long  
The benediction that should make them one.  
So, in the record of a great career,  
Another leaf was turned,—a new bright page  
Opened to meet the seeker's scrutiny,  
And teach the lesson of a life.

## VI

What time  
The silver-tongued Demosthenes held Greece  
Struck into admiration and dumb awe,  
'Twas whispered that the gods had leaned to earth  
To pour their miracle of words upon  
The favored lips of men. And as the thrill  
Of cadenced eloquence enthralled the souls  
Of listening multitudes a deeper faith  
Became the human dower.

So to our land,—

Dove-eyed America whose vizor rests  
Above her brow serene,—came now a voice  
To sway men to its will. Lincoln, inspired  
By loftiness of theme or righteous cause,  
Oft rose to heights sublime. Awkward at first,  
Ungainly in his mien, nor having care  
For outward accessories, when his soul  
Rose in the majesty of spiritual power  
To lift the banner of eternal right,  
He seemed the avatar of Justice, crowned  
With her undying bays. His attitude  
Unconsciously took on a classic mold;  
The lines of that lean figure fell apace  
Into the forms of beauty. From his eyes,—  
Those sentient pools wherein strange shadows lay,—  
Flashed forth the lightnings of a noble wrath,  
And flamed the indignation of a god.  
Invective from his agile tongue poured out  
A withering sarcasm, doubly barbed mayhap  
By the scarce uttered jest. The anecdote,—  
As coarse perchance as Nature's under side,

Yet like to Nature strong, unerring, true,—  
Served as the vestibule to temples wrought  
To ultimate perfection. To the jest  
So flavored with the salt of Attic wit  
That none could miss its purpose, oftentimes  
Succeeded, in one vital moment, words  
Fraught with the pathos of a woe concealed,—  
Touched with the minor music of men's tears.  
That tall shape, stooping as at first it rose,  
That homely visage, as at first it turned  
Full-featured on a half believing throng,  
Became transfigured until they who gazed  
Visioned a nimbus seeming to surround  
The dark dishevelled hair.

Such was the man  
Who now brought to his country's Congress all  
A patriot's fervor. He had followed close  
Upon the heels of Stephen Douglas, he  
Who seemed designed of destiny to be  
Rival of Lincoln with such rivalry  
As brought undying fame to Illinois,  
Which both claimed as a mother.

In the House,  
As fellow members, Winthrop, Collamer,  
John Quincy Adams, Andrew Johnson, he  
Whom coming years brought to a doubtful fame,  
And Alexander Stephens, whose worse fate  
Foredoomed him to rebellion, sat and oft  
Met Lincoln in debate. Here, too, were Toombs,  
And fiery Rhett, and Cobb, who served his State  
Forgetful of his country.

Douglas met,  
As rivals in the Senate, Benton, Dix,  
Keen Simon Cameron and Lewis Cass,  
Grave Daniel Webster, master orator,  
And Hale, and Crittenden, and John Calhoun,  
And (name replete with memoried regret)  
Jefferson Davis.

Through long strenuous years  
Douglas, the leader of Democracy,  
Had faced on many a field of hot debate  
Lincoln, admitted chieftain of the Whigs;  
And now the Nation's legislative halls  
Echoed the rounded phrases of these two,—

One with a cultured eloquence o'erlaid  
With classic lore and fine historic sense;  
The other finding in deep human truth  
And apt similitude the stronger force  
To move the hearts of men.

Dark seemed the days

When war was forced upon a weaker State  
At bidding of an oligarchy, proud  
And arrogant withal. For slavery  
Had cast its baleful shadow o'er the land,  
And Mexico must at a nod be crushed  
That the fell monster might be further gorged,  
And serfdom mar the 'scutcheon of the free.  
  
Lincoln the patriot yielded nothing up  
Of principle. When once, at Ottawa,  
Douglas had charged him with disloyalty,  
He answered, with rare dignity and truth:  
"I was an old Whig, and when in the House  
My vote was sought in favor of the war,  
I did refuse to affirm its righteousness;  
But when my country was in arms, I gave  
My vote for grants of men and money, ay,

For prosecution of the bitter strife  
Even against a sister State. 'Twere well  
To note the clear distinction which subsists  
Between the wish to keep our country right,  
And base betrayal of her in the wrong."  
The war with Mexico brought issues up  
Too soon to lead to conflict. That small cloud,  
No larger than a man's hand, was to grow  
Into a darkling tempest. Even now,  
With Taylor president and party strife  
Stilled only at the voice of sordid gain,  
There came to ears not dulled by platitude  
The low portentous rumblings.

To the man

Who more than others had placed power within  
The hands of Taylor, now the offer came  
Of Oregon's executive control;  
But, with a wisdom haply not explained,  
The offer was refused. 'Twas fated so.  
And when, in after years, one said: "How good  
Was the kind fortune that so guided you!"  
Lincoln, with meditative mien, replied:

"Yes, you are right. Through all my varied life  
I still have been a fatalist. What is  
Must be, and Hamlet speaks the deeper truth:  
'There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will!' 'Tis ever so."  
Then to the deeps of his far-searching eyes  
There came the dreamy look which they knew well  
Who best knew Lincoln, and a silence fell  
That seemed a prophecy.

#### At Washington

The stress of politics grew keener ever,  
And for domestic joys left scanty hours;  
Two boys had blest the marriage, and were now  
The brightest lights of home; for Robert kept  
Much of his father's likeness, and there dwelt  
Upon the brow of Edward some fair trace  
Of that which drew all eyes to Mary Todd,  
When from Kentucky's fields to Illinois  
She brought her coronet of womanhood.



BOOK SECOND



## BOOK SECOND

### I

America, thou whose euphonious name  
Is balsam to the ears of those whose love  
Is basic and undying;  
Thou whose broad fame  
Is founded in eternal justice, thou  
Upon whose brow the bays of peace are lying  
With laurel intertwined,—to thee above  
All other mistresses is due my vow  
Of loyalty and love. What then must be  
The sadness of the thought that thy young life  
Was marred by discord? That an envious cloud,  
Born of the lust of gain, should darken thee  
And bring at last the fratricidal strife,—  
The scarlet scourge of war? Thy pennons proud  
Were doomed to droop, even in the freshening  
breeze

Of thy fair morning tide, and ever through  
Thy matin-song of liberty there went  
The mournful minor tones of bondage. When  
The settlers of Virginia, who knew  
The curse of slavery, besought the King  
To stop the infamy of trade in men,  
He did refuse and back a message sent  
Of stern rebuke. The fathers of the Nation—  
The men who later in their hands did seize  
Freedom's sweet fruit,—  
Regarded bondage as a vanishing  
And temporary evil. At the first  
And general congress of the Colonies  
Fair Philadelphia's legislative halls  
Heard Jefferson proclaim  
His bill of rights, holding a thing accurst  
The law which calls  
A man a chattel. Wide the proclamation  
Spread through the land, and all men heard the bruit  
Of abolition that should free the name  
Of fair America from infamy.  
Later the old Sun Tavern's storied walls

Saw the formation of the first  
Society of Abolition, when  
The men of light and leading in the Nation  
Banded together in a common cause  
To make half-bound America all free,  
And tear from out the fundamental laws  
That earliest, worst  
And fatallest provision. Franklin then  
Became protagonist of freedom's cause,  
And Robert Morris, Patrick Henry, Rush,  
Immortal Washington and Hamilton,  
John Jay and Stiles of Yale,—  
The men whose names had won  
The veneration of their kind.

The righteous path which Pennsylvania trod  
Was followed by New York and Maryland,  
Then by Connecticut, Virginia;  
Nor stayed New Jersey long without the pale,  
All recognizing where the way of God  
Departed from the King's way.  
From the hand  
Of the great-hearted, clear-eyed Jefferson,

There came the ordinance prohibiting  
All slavery throughout the unbounded West;  
'Twas not adopted; had it been, no State  
Curst with an institution so unblest  
Could have been added to the sisterhood.  
The patriot's impulse, as he stands to-day  
With retrospective gaze, is first to sigh:  
"Alas! that they who held the scales of fate  
Should so have erred." The sober second  
thought  
Brings forth the deeper wisdom, and we cry:  
"Necessity of law is ever fraught  
With issues which evade us. If we could  
We would not now undo that past defeat,  
Since through such darkness only could fate bring  
Our souls to nobler knowledge and make meet  
Our hearts for sacrifice." The canker sore  
Fixt in our country's vitals could no more  
Be soothed with balsams into quietude,  
But only by the rude  
And pitiless hand of unrelenting war  
Be reft away forever. Yet the strife

Was in the misty distance, and the love  
Of liberty was spreading. That vast field  
From which were carved five future sovereign  
States,  
Was made secure to freedom. Far above  
All mere expediency was set the star  
Towards which the soul forever gravitates,  
The beacon of all hope, loadstone of life,  
To whose strong power we yield  
As to a deity's bright avatar.  
From schools that graced New England's granite  
hills,  
From Pennsylvania's Quaker righteousness,  
From old Virginia's English rectitude,  
Flowed forth the stream of liberty which made  
The revolution real; the potent ills  
Which followed pauselessly in slavery's train,  
Debasing freemen as a contact lewd  
Debases virtue,—these could never be  
The vestibule of national content.  
The truth was recognized, yet soon arose  
The spectre of pecuniary gain;

The cotton gin an added impulse lent  
To the production of the staple; this  
    Demanded negro labor; from the slave  
Wealth could be wrung,  
And power from wealth, as flows  
    A river from its source; no theories grave  
Of abstract right born of the ethic sense,—  
    No virtues sung  
By poets whose high artistic recompense  
    Was their sufficient guerdon, could outweigh  
The call of selfishness; and so there grew  
    An aristocracy of base intent  
Built on a baser crime. Nor was the North  
    Less guilty than the South. Though keen at  
    first  
To strike away the shackles, all too few  
    Of those who championed freedom ventured forth  
        Upon the sea of politics, to stay  
The flood which swept the South.  
    Men of the North were everywhere immersed  
        In things commercial, enterprises vast,  
Building of railways, opening of mines,

Great irrigation schemes to conquer drouth  
And lines of telegraph to conquer space.  
There was no time to fight for principle  
While yet ungarnered wealth  
Lay ready to the hand, and so there fell  
A shadow of indifference which cast  
Its pall upon the money-getting North;  
Cotton was king in Northern factories  
As in the Southern fields; a Nation's health  
Might suffer so that mill and mine gave forth  
Their golden harvestings to enterprise.  
Then did the face  
Of Justice darken with a frown, and lines  
Of sorrow lie upon her regal brow.  
A base alliance made between the greed  
Of Northern money-kings and Southern lords  
Of a sham aristocracy, arose  
To hold the Nation in its grip of steel  
And make the government a tool to feed  
Rapacity and pride.  
The Southern people, bred to politics,  
Grew arrogant and proud, as those who feel

Superior power to organize and lead.  
Thus out of circumstance did fate endow  
The South with sure control. The weaker side  
Became the stronger. History affords  
No apter lesson. So the slave power grew  
To be the dominant factor, till there came  
The hand of destiny to clear anew  
The Country's forehead of its brand of shame.

## II

Ironical the fate that in a land  
Sacred to freedom slavery should hold  
High court within the capital; yet this  
Insult was ours to bear.  
From the free soil of Philadelphia  
The Nation's seat, removed to Washington,  
Became the citadel of bondage. Bold  
And ever bolder did the serpent hiss  
As shrank the Nation, fearing to make stand  
Before its closing coils. From Georgia  
By cession came the land

Out of which two great States  
Should afterwards evolve. From friendly France  
Louisiana, purchased, brought her weight  
Of forty thousand slaves.

From Spain a territory doomed by fate  
To human chains was bought, and Florida  
Added her quota further to enhance  
The power of Southern greed.

Then at the Nation's gates  
Missouri knocked, insisting on the need  
Of that base institution which depraves  
The souls of those who wear  
Its galling fetters. With far-searching eyes  
Clay saw the opportunity to check  
The monster's progress Northward, and so drew  
The terms of the Missouri Compromise,  
Giving the state to bondage, but forever  
Prohibiting extension to the North.  
Vainly did Douglas prophesy that never  
Should the next question like a ghost arise  
To plague the country. Yet more arrogant  
Grew the sham aristocracy, whose power

Was based in that iniquity of law

Which gave the master right to cast a vote

Proportioned to the number of his slaves.

Law never knew

So strange a logic as the people saw

Writ in the Constitution. Southern cant

Was matched by Northern failure well to note

That slaves were either men or property;

If men, the franchise was their own by right;

If property, no owner had the dower

Of ballots based on wealth.

The people closed their eyes and shunned the light

Lest, when they came to see,

The cancer which consumed the Nation's health  
Should grow into a conflict ending all.

Yet are the scales of God forever true;

No human judgments may His ends foretell;  
But they whose vision was the keenest knew

The conflict now was irrepressible.

The grasping spirit overreached itself,

Making unrighteous war on Mexico;

And California, seized for love of pelf,

Became the seed of liberty. For lo!  
A mighty call  
Went up against slave labor in that land  
Of golden promise, and though Wilmot failed  
In his "Proviso," Freedom took her stand  
For human liberty, and tyrants quailed  
Before the imminent storm.

Now from ten States were delegations sent  
To Philadelphia. Thither Garrison,  
Phillips and Adams, Clay and Channing went,  
And Whittier, he whose placid muse had won  
The affection warm  
Of all his countrymen. A pact was made  
To free the country's 'scutcheon of its stain,  
And to exterminate the abhorrent trade  
In human flesh, which rendered worse than vain  
Our boasted liberty.

Now party lines were drawn for deadlier strife,  
Men saw the coming storm with quickened  
breath,  
While in the balance the Republic's life,  
Shadowed beneath the brooding brows of death,  
Hung tremblingly.

### III

From out the turmoil and the deep unrest  
A figure now emerges, and a mind  
That like an Eastern storied palimpsest  
Is brilliant in perception overlaid  
With matchless eloquence,—a force refined  
In the white fires of passion, unafraid,  
Yet ever finding in diplomacy  
The safest exit from the politic snares  
That oft beset ambition. Such as he  
Spring into leadership and unawares  
Become their own dark Nemesis.  
The Senate's leaders, Webster, Clay, Calhoun,  
Had fallen into silence, and the walls  
Which once had echoed their euphonious calls  
To duty in the fields where honor is,  
Heard nevermore the music, all too soon  
Hushed in the quietude which often falls  
Before the tempest bursts.  
To them succeeded, in the early prime  
Of manhood, Stephen Arnold Douglas, he

Who seemed the very flower of his time,—  
The idol of the young Democracy.  
And as the soldier thirsts  
For glory, so did Douglas thirst for fame,  
    Finding in his misguided view, the way  
In truculent complaisance with that same  
    Insatiate monster whose dark shadow lay  
Already o'er the country like a pall.  
So when came Kansas and Nebraska, seeking  
    Their territorial rights,  
Douglas cast faith aside, and, boldly speaking  
In favor of a crime, sought to wipe all  
    The laws that shielded liberty away.  
'Twas then that the Missouri Compromise,—  
    A solemn obligation made between  
        The friends of freedom and of slavery,—  
Was ended by repeal;  
'Twas then the light  
    Went out in Liberty's high citadel,  
And sad America's beseeching eyes  
    Gave up their dole of tears!  
On such a day

Rose Seward in the Senate, valiantly  
Proclaiming to the sense-enthralled throng:  
“The struggle which we now so keenly feel  
Is that which ever, through the aging years,  
Exists uncrushed between the right and wrong.  
You may as soon compel the heaving sea  
To stay his waves, or bid the fecund earth  
Quench her internal fires,  
As bid the human mind forget its birth,—  
The human heart cease craving liberty.”  
Houston of Texas, too, refused to give  
His vote to break a solemn act of faith,  
And, pointing to the gilded eagle, cried:  
“Yon symbol proud above your head remains  
Shrouded in black, as it were now the wraith  
Of murdered justice. Our departed sires,  
Whose memories in our hearts forever live,  
Must from the higher realms deplore the chains  
We rivet on the free.  
So faith is broken, honor crucified.”  
All, all in vain! The barriers were cast down  
That held the curse of slavery from domain

Over the North and West.  
Each Southern town  
Put on its gala dress. In Washington  
The officers of government wore smiles;  
Guns thundering from the capitol's green hill  
Proclaimed in salvos over listening miles  
The triumph of the slave power,—victory won  
At cost of rectitude; the powers of ill  
Wearing the victor's crown.  
Blue Lodges, formed throughout the exultant South,  
Sought to take quick possession, and extend  
To the new territory slavery's sway;  
While through the thoughtful North, from mouth  
to mouth,  
Was passed the word of warning, to defend  
Free soil from this pollution. Day by day  
The lines were closer drawn. New England  
formed  
Emigrant Aid Societies, and soon  
Came hardy settlers, taking up the land  
For farming. While the foes of freedom  
stormed,

Its friends grew more determined that the boon  
Should not be lost; and so the fires were fanned  
To ever threatening flame. A man arose,—  
A man of conscience, yet with judgment bent  
By personal wrongs,—to lead the freemen on,  
John Brown of Ossawatomie; and those  
Who felt his purpose right assistance lent  
To aid its consummation. Robinson,  
Pomeroy and Lane, and many an earnest soul,  
Helped to build villages, make settlements,  
Erect schoolhouses; while, with equal zeal,  
The fiery slaveholders sought control  
Of the wide land from which the law's defence  
Had been withdrawn through cowardly repeal.  
Such was the bitter struggle now at hand  
For Kansas. On the side of slavery  
Was all official influence;  
The government of the United States  
Was in the grasp of foemen to its weal.  
From end to end of Liberty's own land  
The friends of Liberty were made to feel  
The bitter sense

Of base betrayal, and as honor hates  
The stigma of surrender to a lie,  
So in the conscience of the serious North  
Sank ever deeper the compelling thought  
That Liberty and Slavery henceforth  
Could not dwell side by side,—could not be brought  
Into the harmony for which those sigh  
Who love their native land.

#### IV

Now came the breaking down of party lines;  
Old issues disappeared, and on the new  
And vital questions men divided stood;  
Political allegiance, which confines  
The individual action when the view  
Is unobscured by stressful circumstance,  
Was cast aside. The overbearing mood  
Of the slave-holding South was bearing fruit;  
The Democratic party which so long  
Had been the citadel of bondage, now  
Was rent in twain. Men of conviction strong

Against the right of property in slaves,  
Broke from the ranks, and, as though following suit,  
The old Whigs split, some seeking to endow  
With privilege of franchise only those  
Born of the native soil, while others held  
To broader views, though still insistently  
Demanding freedom for the man who craves  
As for the man who claims it. So there came  
A new alignment. Human liberty  
Became the slogan of a mighty host  
Who needed but a leader and a name,  
And at the appointed moment there arose  
In Illinois the leader and the name,—  
Abraham Lincoln, the Republican,  
Chosen of destiny to mold and weld  
The elements diverse  
Into the party that should come to be  
The standard bearer in a new crusade,—  
The force cohesive when the Nation's shame  
Should culminate, and human passion fan  
Hate's embers into war.  
The time of compromise was past; the curse

Which strangled a free people could no longer  
Be shut from sight, or be by falsehood made  
A seeming blessing. Lincoln, hitherto  
But little known beyond his State, came forth  
As freedom's champion. From near and far  
A sudden cry went thrilling through the land  
That here was one whose sturdy faith was stronger  
Than all the craven fears which made the North  
Bend to the Southern lords:  
No history affords  
A lesson more astounding. Douglas came,  
With futile argument to gloss his shame  
In forcing the repeal  
Of the Missouri Compromise. He brought  
The apt allusion, the well-rounded phrase,  
The eloquence and the persuasion bland  
Which, in the Senate, oft had carried through  
Measures the most unpromising.  
In rapt attention Lincoln listened, then  
Replied in utterance so deeply fraught  
With feeling and in logic so complete,  
That every auditor was made to feel

The inherent virtue of his cause.  
The state-house, crowded to its outer doors,  
Was still as death;  
A burst of wild applause  
Succeeded to the tension, while each breath  
Was held awaiting  
The final periods of a speech replete  
With beauty which outran perfunctory praise,  
And sense which forced conviction. Once  
again,  
When Douglas, at Peoria, sought to prove  
The worse the better, Lincoln, like the flood  
Which a pent torrent, liberated, pours  
Upon the unstable reeds,  
Tore from its roots the flimsy argument,  
Till Douglas, crushed, essayed at last to move  
His adversary to compassion. Thus  
Did Lincoln leap to National renown.  
Wise in the knowledge of his country's needs,  
Great in devotion to her cause, he stood  
A leader at the parting of the ways  
Where friendship and life's holiest ties were rent,

And, 'neath the shadow of an incubus,  
A smiling land drooped in the direful frown  
Of those who plucked away her honored bays.

## V

Fraud, slavery's best handmaid, now became  
The means to rivet Kansas in her chains;  
And at Lecompton, acting in the name  
Of a free people, brought about a sham  
And meagre constitution, fastening  
The blight of slavery upon the State.  
Then, in the righteous anger which disdains  
All compromise, the hardy settlers held  
Convention at Topeka, drafting there  
An instrument of freedom, wrought to weld  
Fair Kansas in the Union, North and West,  
Of commonwealths forever dedicate  
To liberty and law.  
The people saw,  
And seeing, welcomed the oncoming strife;  
Impending battle hurtled in the air;

The crawling monster stood at last confest;  
And when the legislature was dispersed  
By force of arms,  
At order of a recreant President,  
All timorous alarms  
Gave place to a determination, first  
To conquer liberty, more dear than life,  
Nor ever rest content  
Till Kansas should be free.

Yet was the goal far distant. That great court  
Which hitherto the world had deemed the  
august  
Tribunal of a sovereign people, fell  
To be the instrument of party need,—  
To bend to circumstance, and so abort  
A Nation's welfare, that a section's creed  
Should be writ in the fundamental law.

The calm historian, standing where the dust  
And din of battle reach him not, can tell  
With faltering tongue the story of a case  
Become historic through the inherent flaw  
Within its reasoning:

Dred Scott, the negro slave, the merest thing  
Of sale and barter, now became  
The pivot about which the questions turned  
That should at last be wrought to settlement  
On bloody fields of war. Type of his race,  
He symbolized the shame  
Of a great Nation's highest court, and earned  
For Taney and his fellows that low place  
Which, in the judgment of posterity,  
Is silently assigned to those content  
To sell their birthright for rewards all base  
And sordid utterly.  
Nor satisfied to rend with ruthless hand  
The instrument which made the land half free,  
This cruel decision, taking its false stand  
Upon the right of local sovereignty,  
In one breath said that each community  
Should make its own decision to exclude  
Or to admit the slave, and in the next  
Proclaimed the right of him who held a slave  
To take him, as his very property,  
Into a State whose Constitution gave

That slave the right of human liberty.

Then, further to becloud the question vext,  
These sordid Solons, seeking to obtrude  
Their unsought wisdom,—turning quite aside  
From what the case involved, boldly declared  
The law unconstitutional which fixt  
A boundary to the realm of slavery.  
So were self interest and false logic mixt  
That people guaranteed untrammeled choice,  
Found themselves fettered and without a voice  
In the most vital issue. They were free  
So long, and so long only, as they chose  
To keep themselves ensnared  
Within the meshes of the net which those  
Who hated liberty had opened wide  
To hold a land enslaved.  
So was the issue of States' Rights,—that twin  
Abortion born with slavery,—the spawn  
Of greed and treason,—thrust unduly forth,  
To force confusion while the people craved  
Peace and the opportunity to win  
From bounteous Nature her unstinted store

Of wealth diverse and splendid. Like the dawn  
    Touching to life the sleeping fields, the North  
Had seen the hope of a free country grow  
Into a glorious promise. Now the light  
    Seemed dying out forever. Nevermore  
Should laughing rivers, all unfettered, flow  
Into the boundless sea. In hope's despite  
    The chains were being forged with stronger links,  
And from the rostrums of a sneering world  
Scorn mixt with pity o'er the sea was hurled  
    At a Republic based upon a lie,—  
At Liberty with wrists in iron gyves,—  
At a great Nation builded on the claim  
That all men were born free and equal, yet  
    Outraging every holiest natural tie,  
And placing in unsparing hands the lives  
Of fellow creatures,—ay, the right to maim  
And whip to silence,—ay, the right to set  
    Firm lip to lip, and, like the storied Sphinx,  
To answer nothing to a people's plea  
And to a Nation's questioning!  
    Alas! the deeper shame that, at the fount

Of government, should dwell the coward soul  
That bends to arrogance. The Nation's force  
Was ever wielded at the Southern nod,  
And ever quick to bring  
Confusion to the champions of free  
Unfettered toil. The Congress did not count  
The final cost of peace that gave control  
To men whose theory had become their God,—  
Whose conscience, seared and deadened to  
remorse,  
Now made the worse the better,—made sincere  
Their faith in that base institution, born  
In love of power and the human greed,  
Which seeks the fruitage of another's toil.  
Alas! that in the chair of Washington  
Was seated now a weakling, in whom fear  
Kept pace with indecision,—the mere foil  
And tool of stronger men,—target of scorn  
Of every patriot groaning to be freed  
From the intolerable bondage of a class  
Whose hands had seized the prize our fathers  
won,—

Whose pride, alas!  
Outran discretion, and whose final deed  
Let loose the dogs of fratricidal war.

## VI

With what nice jointure, what unmatched design,  
Are wrought the works of Providence, to fill  
Each one its destined purpose! To combine  
All friends of human freedom, that the will  
To banish slavery might find the way,—  
This was the goal now set before the eyes  
Of earnest thinking men. The force that lay  
In Sumner's eloquence, in Seward's wise  
And witty epigram, and in the keen  
Philosophy of Phillips, Trumbull, Chase,  
Gave strength to those who, faltering between  
The love of peace and duty's call to face  
A conflict irrepressible, now turned  
For counsel to their leaders. Through the South  
Determination hardened into hate;  
Concessions, offered timidly, were spurned;

The administration, speaking by the mouth  
Of a weak President, had learned too late  
    The lesson of a government's high call  
        To enforce authority. Even Douglas saw  
        The pride which ever goes before a fall  
    Rearing its head too brazenly. The law  
        Was being wrenched, and Congress bent the  
            knee  
To dictatorial masters, who upheld  
    The standard of a Southern chivalry  
    Above the flag of freedom. 'Twas the hour  
For presentation of the issues. Now  
    The people craved the truth, and Lincoln saw  
        Letters of fire writ large along the sky,—  
    Letters which spelled  
        A word to thrill each patriot heart, and dower  
    Each soul with courage. So when Douglas came  
        To hold Chicago in the magic net  
        Of his most specious logic, Lincoln met  
    And answered him minutely, showing how  
        The arguments were faulty,—where the flaw,  
    And where the reasoning oft reached a lame

And impotent conclusion. Then a cry  
Went up for more discussion. Bloomington  
Heard Douglas roll his splendid periods,  
And Springfield listened rapt to words that won  
The ringing plaudits of a thousand tongues.  
And Lincoln, sitting silent 'mid the throng,  
Was conscious of a spiritual voice which blent,  
Divinely human, like an undertone  
Beneath the soaring sound. No man among  
The listeners could guess the passion pent  
Within his bosom, like a tide that floods,  
But cannot burst, its boundaries. Quite alone  
He sat and pondered. Then, when evening came,  
Within the capitol, upon the same  
Platform which Douglas in the morning used,  
He spoke, and on the listening multitude  
There fell conviction and belief that fused  
All feelings into one. For Lincoln's words  
Were charged with faith which bears religion's  
stamp,  
And each position in his argument  
Was reinforced, and in its fulness stood

Unanswerable. Truth, which ever girds  
The man who, in a time of stress, is sent  
    By a kind Providence to bear the lamp  
    Of knowledge to a people all confused,  
Wrapped in its folds this leader among men,  
    Who came to rescue Liberty abused,  
And, with the eloquence of voice and pen,  
    To rend his country's chains.

Now followed joint discussion of the themes  
    Of vital moment; first at Ottawa,  
Later at Freeport, Jonesborough; again  
At Charleston, Galesburg, Quincy, Alton. Then  
    An intellectual battle, which remains  
    Unique in history's record, or the dreams  
Of high ambition, was fought valiantly,  
    And from the fray  
    Victor and vanquished bore a fame away  
All unforgotten of posterity.

How vivid is the picture fancy draws  
    Of this arena and the combat fought  
Of these contestants, pleading each a cause  
    Dear to his heart,—each with a message fraught

With untold consequence, and both impelled  
By knowledge that America stood still,  
With forward bended head and breath withheld  
The while the struggle wavered. Stern of will  
And fixed of purpose, Douglas seemed to be  
The embodiment of large ambitions. Brows  
Broad and o'erarching like a canopy  
Above his eloquent eyes,—a wealth of hair,  
Dark in its purple deeps,—a mobile mouth,  
Molded a lost cause fitly to espouse,  
And on the battlements of blank Despair  
To plant Hope's banner. From the amber  
South  
He drew the honeyed eloquence that held  
His audience spellbound. From the sunburnt West  
A wafture of the prairies' breath compelled  
The senses to obedience. His deep chest  
Swelled with emotion, as his words bore forth  
The message of his brain. His short, stout  
frame  
Vibrated, and, as ever to the North  
The inerrant needle turns, so ever came

Such were the giants wrestling for a prize  
Beyond the computation of a mind

Yoked to material aims. The compromise  
Which one suggested, and in terms defined,  
Was by the other deemed the weak device  
To soothe the cancerous growth which soon must come  
Even to the country's vitals. In such mood  
Did Lincoln, moved to seeming prophecy,  
Quiver upon the platform where he stood,  
And with the passion of conviction cry:  
“Sometimes I see the end of slavery;  
I feel the time is coming when the sun  
Shall shine no more, nor from the darkened sky  
Shall any rain fall, on a single one  
Of all God's creatures going forth each day  
To unrequited toil.”  
How deep the inspiration who shall say?  
Son of our native soil!  
Was his alone the vision,—his the way  
To reach the appointed goal?  
We may not know but in all gratitude  
Be thankful that, within that temple rude,  
Dwelt Lincoln's crystal soul.



## BOOK THIRD



## BOOK THIRD

### I

How oft upon a breathless summer noon  
Falls the faint whisper of a coming storm,  
And, as the sun turns to the waiting West  
Where white cloud banks thrust up their shoulders high  
Into the glow of gold, a strange, long hush  
Follows the bustle of the breezes, still  
And ominous as fate, as though God held  
His breath a little, ere he uttered forth  
A word of high command.

'Twas even so

That everywhere, from those stone-bounded farms  
Still echoing to the guns of Bunker Hill,  
Even to the warm bayous, the thirsty sands  
Where Mississippi ends a long career,  
A silent menace in the oppressive air  
Seemed dolorously to hush the lips of men.

Then, as the cleavage of opinion grew  
Ever defined more sharply, there was heard  
Another word in whispers iterant,  
More widely spoke than Slavery, such a word  
As brought strange joy to tyrant ears, and filled  
The souls of freedom's lovers with dismay,  
A word of fear,—Secession.

Was it then  
In vain the fathers had made sacrifice  
To weld the colonies, that into one  
The many should be merged? That patriot blood,  
Poured out at Concord and at Lexington,  
To purchase liberty, had made more dear  
Our sacred Western soil?

Alas! the call  
Of judgment, as of conscience, falls unheard  
Upon the ears of passion. Through the South  
The lightning of disunion rent its way;  
The cry went up of rule or ruin; they  
Who long had gripped the Nation like a vise,  
Would take no counsel of adversity,  
But, dreaming of an empire builded high

Upon the fruitage of unrighteous toil,—  
Puffed with false notions of a finer skill  
In politics and statecraft, these hot sons  
Of a long-suffering mother sought to strike  
That patient mother down. With what deep sense  
Of anguish did the loyal North take heed  
Of hastening events! More sharply drew  
The lines of party. Now the eyes of men  
Turned, seeking leaders; and as slowly grows  
Out of the mist a vision, so there loomed  
The figure of a man upon the plains,—  
Tall, gaunt, untutored of the schools, yet touched  
With such a grace of Nature, such large mind,  
As might befit a later Moses, sent  
To lead a later people to their goal.  
Across the borders of wide Illinois  
Floated a name adown the Western breeze.  
Across Ohio, Pennsylvania, came,  
In uncouth syllables, like an uttered faith  
Half understood, reverberating calls,  
Repeating as though mystic meaning lay  
Amid its folds, the name of Lincoln. Soon

A whisper grew to volume of a cry;  
The teeming East, till now but half aroused,—  
Grown gross and all intent in garnering  
The golden harvest of its thrift,—held out  
Appealing hands towards that vast prairie land  
Whose sunburnt face wore youth's bright smile.

There came

The call for a deliverance,—for a man,—  
For one strong soul around whose constancy  
Might group opposing forces. To that call  
Answer was given; Abraham Lincoln came,  
And stood before the people of New York,  
Who went in curiosity to see  
This Western prodigy, this man of jokes,  
Stump speaker against Douglas; he best known  
For much coarse humor, and a pretty wit  
At repartee and sally. It was there  
That Bryant sat presiding. Greeley, too,  
Half hearted at the first, yet growing grave,  
As, one by one, the records of the past  
Were from the storehouse of that pregnant brain  
Brought forth to light the present.

They who went  
To scoff, remained to pray. This Western boor,  
Rising to dignity, and swept along  
By the heroic urgencie of his theme,  
Soon held his audience spellbound.

He based all  
On that great charter of our liberties  
Which, holding all men free and equal, stood  
Our bulwark for the future. It were vain  
To speak of compromise while treason sank  
Its poisoned fangs and hissed its hideous name,—  
Vain to placate a people who had sought  
Excuse to rend the Nation, and pluck out  
From our bright flag its stars.

“Let us have faith,”  
He cried outstretching a prophetic hand,  
“Let us have faith that right makes might, and so  
Dare to do all our duty to the end,  
As we shall understand it.”

Struck to awe,  
The people of that cultured audience heard  
The solemn words of scholarly and rare

Wisdom pronounced by lips whose utterance  
Seemed guided by compelling power and touched  
With a celestial fire. A mighty change  
Was wrought within the hour. A single speech  
Swept Lincoln into leadership throughout  
The limits of a country now at last  
Awakened to its peril. Wide his fame  
Was carried through the North, the East, the West,  
And from a thousand thousand throats burst forth  
A cry of exultation that the hour  
Which brought the crisis also brought the man.  
The Party which in Illinois had raised  
The unblemished standard of free statehood, soon  
Spread mightily throughout the land, and he  
Became the chosen leader of its vast  
And ever growing ranks.

And all the while  
Secession sentiment took deeper hold  
Throughout the turbulent South. On Breckinridge  
Fell the poor mantle of an erring cause,  
While Douglas, claiming faithfully to hold  
The scales of moderation as between

The advocates of sectional designs,  
Raised high the banner of his name, and fought  
A valiant battle for ambition's goal.  
Lincoln, supremely conscious of the weight  
Of grave responsibility which soon  
Must bear upon the Country's President,  
Shrank from a nomination to that high  
And care-encumbered office; but the call,  
Now grown imperious, could no more be spurned,  
And so, with this fair crown of his desire  
Haply within his reach, he took the cross  
Which patriots proffered, and became the brave  
Unflinching standard-bearer of a Cause.

## II

Now destiny, that leans to no man's lure,  
Leads onward to the crucial test of strength,  
While a vast Nation, pausing in its task  
And daily occupation, shows the world  
A spectacle more grand than pageantry  
And all the pomps of war. From morn till eve

The fateful ballots fall; from morn till eve  
A mighty people waits with quickened breath  
The issue of a peaceful struggle fraught  
With war's grim possibilities. At last  
The end is reached. The country solemnly  
On Abraham Lincoln lays the accolade  
Of its supreme command. And he, bowed down  
With weighty sense of that great burden, lifts  
Eyes sanctified by tears towards Heaven, whose smile  
Seems shadowed by the clouds of Earth's despair.  
Yet now a gleam of hope o'er Northern skies  
Breaks to the glory of a sunburst. Through  
The nerves of patriot freemen thrills the fine  
Vibration of a coming action, filled  
With promise of deliverance, and at last  
Assertion of a manhood long betrayed,  
The breaking of the bonds of shameful fear.  
Nor at the North alone is the result  
With satisfaction hailed. The Southern men  
Who once made slavery their sole excuse  
For a long-lost allegiance, now come forth  
In colors honester, and wide proclaim

Their final goal disunion. They rejoice  
That the election of a free-soil man,—  
Choice of an “abolition President,”—  
Should furnish specious reason for the step  
Long dreamed of and desired.

And so begins  
The stress and struggle of a contest meant  
To pluck at last a righteous victory,  
In hate’s despite, and so to bind thy brows,  
O Land of our affection, with new bays.

Ah, proud fond mother, rended of thy sons;  
Ah, bleeding mother, whose mute wounds betray  
More eloquently than all spoken words  
Thine offspring’s black ingratitude! What tongue  
Shall fashion thought to utterance, or bear  
To hearkening ages knowledge of the wrongs  
Which mark thy base betrayal?

In the halls  
Reared for thy uses, stalks Conspiracy,  
And damned Treason slinks along those aisles  
Once trodden of patriot feet. Thine arches now

Resound with blatant threats, where once was heard  
The echoed eloquence of Henry Clay,  
Or Webster's organ tones. Buchanan sits,  
Palsied and puerile, in the seat made great  
By Washington and Jefferson, and all  
The sources of thy power are sapped away  
By traitors under cover of the dark.  
Within the Cabinet are men intent  
To compass thy undoing,—to disarm,  
And so make impotent thy battlements,  
And rive thee of thy strength. The ship of State  
Must be dismantled ere its flag be struck  
At bidding of the foe. A Memminger  
Boasts openly that, with a pliant tool  
Within the White House, all is easy now  
To crush the Federal government, and make  
All Lincoln's efforts futile. From the vaults  
Of a depleted treasury are drawn,  
And used improvidently, funds whose care  
Devolved on Howell Cobb. From each free State  
And from the Northern arsenals are sent  
Arms and munitions to the rebel South,

That so the nerves of war may be at hand  
To strike the power that made them. Floyd, alert  
To serve Secession, bears a brazen brow  
Beneath his crown of shame, and scatters wide  
The soldiers of the country to far posts  
And distant reservations; while the ships,  
Making at best a feeble navy, go,  
At order of a Toucy, well beyond  
The reach of sudden call.

And all the while  
Each traitor, boasting of his “honor,” draws,  
With promptitude punctilious, his pay;  
Each arch conspirator goes up and down  
Demanding mileage, salary and all  
The perquisites which a too generous land  
Gives to a ruthless horde.

Ah, strange indeed  
The spectacle of government in hands  
Intent to overthrow it! Davis, Cobb,  
Toombs and their co-conspirators, each day  
In conclave plot high treason, and each day  
Draw sustenance from that fond mother’s breast

Against whose heart their poniards, ready drawn,  
Long to strike home. A nice diplomacy  
Marks every step of the recusant States.  
One after other, legislatures pass  
Secession ordinances. One by one  
The Southern Representatives withdraw,  
Leaving the trail of treason in their wake.  
Thus while events are crowding fast, and faith  
Half falters even in Northern hearts, the stern  
Imperious call to duty thrills the soul  
Of that unmatchable American,  
Who, standing on the dark brink of a chasm,  
Pales not, but bends his shoulders to the task  
Which graves its deepening lines across his brow.

### III

Anderson of old Kentucky,—  
Born and bred in old Kentucky,—  
Prated little of his “honor,”  
Cared as little for his life.  
He was of the stuff of heroes,

(Anderson of old Kentucky,)  
With a soldier's intuition  
That surrender of position  
At beginning of the strife  
Scarce could be considered plucky,  
Though expectant Southern Neros  
Dreamed of fiddling, while sedition  
Through a wounded land was rife;—  
Deemed this man exceeding lucky,  
(Anderson of old Kentucky,)  
That he had a rare occasion  
To be loyal to the South;  
Loyal to a section merely,  
Though betraying by evasion  
What all true men love most dearly,—  
God and country! Treason's mouth  
To the man of old Kentucky,  
(Anderson of old Kentucky,)  
Whispered words beneath its breath.  
Then the War Department sent him  
Where, in Moultrie, rebels pent him,  
While around the soldier plucky,

(Anderson of old Kentucky,)  
Cannon threatened death.

Floyd, who prated much of "honor,"  
Thought it no disgrace to strip  
Arsenals of war munitions,  
Armories of arms,—to slip  
Through the War Department's portal  
Stores to Southern States, to be  
Ready for the new conditions  
Of the war which slavery  
Had at last made certain, mortal,  
Too, perchance, for one or both  
Of the stern contestants, waiting  
For the signal, haply loath  
First to strike, and ever hating  
Thought of bloodshed in the land.  
And Floyd, thinking he was certain  
Of a willing quick compliance  
By the man of old Kentucky,  
(Anderson of old Kentucky,)  
Sent him, in the firm reliance

That when time should lift the curtain  
On the drama of the war,  
He would yield the fort's possession  
To the forces of Secession,—  
Yield, nor strive to stand  
Firm against the South's defiance  
And the cannon's roar.

Three score men and five in Moultrie,—  
In outworn, decrepit Moultrie,—  
Spent the Christmas making merry  
Though the time was full of dole.  
Came an order on the morrow  
From the man of old Kentucky,  
(Anderson of old Kentucky,)  
Silently supplies to ferry,—  
Silently, as though in sorrow,  
Men and arms in boats to carry  
Off to Sumter, when the sun  
Should be setting. Every soul  
Then embarking from Fort Moultrie,—  
Outworn and decrepit Moultrie,—

Passed the guard-boats in the harbor,  
Passed the gates, nor sought to tarry  
Till the destined goal was won.

Then when Charleston, on the morrow,  
Woke to find the fort deserted,—  
Realized the plan concerted,—  
There was anger far and near;  
And as over Sumter floated  
Free the flag of starry beauty,  
Five and sixty men devoted  
Raised a long and lusty cheer  
For the man of old Kentucky,  
(Anderson of old Kentucky,)  
He who knew a soldier's duty,  
Never knowing fear.

#### IV

How sad the closing in of night, the slow  
Departure of the faint glow of the sun  
Which once had lit Hope's day!

From patriot hearts,  
Both North and South, belief that some fair way  
Would yet be found for peace, died sorrowfully,  
And in the place of soothing and of scorn,—  
From the great North concession,—from the South  
Insistence upon mastership,—there grew  
Determination, on the one hand, now  
To save the Union, though salvation meant  
War's ravages and ruin; on the other,  
To fight for statehood and perpetual right  
To slavery and secession. Boastfully  
The cry went forth: "They will not dare attempt  
Coercion of the South," while through the North  
Rang out bold words, wherein the wish, perhaps,  
Was father to the thought: "They will not dare  
To fire upon the flag." And we, who stand  
To-day upon the parapet of time,  
Through history's perspective see that both  
Boast and belief were idle. For behind  
Each stern assertion lay the stalwart will  
Of manhood that was all American,  
Though for the moment severed. It were well

To ask where, in this mental crisis, stood  
The man about whose personality  
All history seemed to turn. The primal call  
For ultimate justice, equity exact,  
Was Lincoln's high incentive. To his soul  
The thought of human bondage was replete  
With all that is abhorrent. To his mind  
A free Republic built on Slavery  
Was a political monstrosity  
Self-doomed to sure destruction. Yet he saw  
With Southern eyes a Southern problem. Here  
The Institution had fixed firm its roots  
In a too pliant soil. No abstract plea  
Could justify a stealage, or make right  
The confiscation of the property  
Of citizens protected by the law.  
He deprecated with his utmost force  
The thought of setting free the slaves without  
Just compensation to the owners, ay,  
Payment in fullest measure. Let the loss  
Thus incidental to a righteous act  
Be borne by all the Nation, not alone

By those whom circumstance had caught within  
The meshes of its net. To buy the slaves,  
To free them, to give back the precious gift  
Of individual liberty vouchsafed  
To every being by the Almighty,—this  
Was Lincoln's lofty dream. He recognized  
The difference in the races; that the black,  
Inferior in development, could not,  
And should not, ever occupy the plane,  
Of the Caucasian. He renounced with ire  
Social equality of white and black,—  
Renounced it as abhorrent to the sense,  
And fatal to the good, of both. His plea  
Was but for liberty, the human right  
To universal manhood, and the dower  
Of nature to her children. From the hour  
When first he saw a slave upon the block  
Being bartered as a chattel, his great soul  
Turned sick with loathing, and his whole career  
Was molded by the love of freedom. Now,  
When the impending crisis loomed above  
The bent heads of a mighty people, dark

And ominous as fate, the vision changed,  
And the immediate necessity  
Pressed on him, till upon his heart was writ,  
As *Calais* upon Mary's, one sole phrase—  
*To save the Union.* Question of the slave  
Must for the time be put aside, to wait  
The working out of evolution's law.  
'Twas Lincoln's task to save, at any cost,  
The fabric builded by our fathers' hands,—  
Cemented in the blood of patriot sires.  
Such was his aspiration, and, with faith  
Firm fixt in God's omnipotence, he bent  
His shoulders to the wheel, while 'round him grouped  
The loyal manhood of America.  
And feeling, still divided, seemed to grow  
Daily more constant in his constancy.

Now, in convention at Montgomery,  
A form of government was made to clothe  
Rebellion in the garments of the law;  
And Davis, whose ability was seared  
By such vindictiveness as rarely mars

An intellect like his, was chosen chief  
Of a great people greatly borne away  
Upon the tide of passion. Solidly  
The people were Secessionists. Not so  
In Texas, where the love of country held  
Its sway in many hearts. 'Twas needful there  
To cozen fraud and turn to treachery,  
Buying the doubtful voters, and at last  
Forging the ballots which forced Texas out  
And tore her from her moorings. One more shame,  
One more humiliation, to bow down  
The head of scorned America! Her forts,  
Her arsenals and ammunition, all  
Were at the bidding of a mob self styled  
A Sovereign State, surrendered tamely, while  
The lone star flag rose in the air above  
The banner of the Nation; and the troops,  
Lacking a leader with a soldier's heart,  
Marched heartless and unsoldierly away.

V

Plots dark and counterplots. No man might know  
Where the assassins lurked intent to strike  
The standard-bearer down. The boast was heard  
That he whose great commission bore the seal  
Of an untrammeled people should not live  
To execute their will. And as the time  
Drew near for Lincoln to assume the robes  
Of his high office, deep anxiety  
Oppressed all loyal hearts.

Almost by stealth  
The coming President was hurried through  
The towns and cities which should most have vied  
To do him honor. And when, on the eve  
Of his inauguration, Lincoln stood  
Among Americans within the gates  
Of the American Capital, he felt  
A sense intuitive of threatening clouds  
Which lowered like a pall. Then came the day  
That ushered in an epoch big with fate.  
About the East front of the capitol

The functionaries of a government  
Upon the brink of ruin gathered where  
Successive Presidents had solemnly  
Taken the oath of office. In the throng  
Stood Seward, he whose statesmanship o'ertopped  
The crafty efforts of his adversaries;  
And Chase, with such a presence as proclaimed  
The noble mind intent on noble aims.  
Firm and erect, the venerable Scott  
Watched with a soldier's eye the pageantry,  
The while, above his white and shaggy brows,  
The anxious lines seemed deepening one by one.  
For guileful treason had nigh reft his hands  
Of every shard of military strength,  
And now, when from the Nation's capitol  
A prayer was offered to the Nation's God,—  
When the mild sceptre of democracy  
Passed from a weakling's coward hand to meet  
The firm grasp of a man,—there were but few  
Trained soldiers to be mustered for a need,  
A handful gathered by the vigilant Scott,—  
Militia, regulars,—a scanty band

To do a mighty duty. On the stand  
Was Taney, whose soiled ermine ill became  
The administrator of a solemn oath.  
The scholar Sumner and the student Wade  
Were near Buchanan, with his courtly mien  
And all uncourtly spirit; while in front  
Stood the persuasive Douglas, tactfully  
Reaching his hand to hold the hat of one  
Erstwhile his adversary, and in doing so  
Imparting to a menial act the grace  
And dignity of knighthood. From the crowd  
Gleamed eyes whose light of hate was ill concealed  
By an assumed indifference. No man knew  
Whose soul was loyal or whose heart was hot  
With treason's smouldering fire. The air was charged  
With coming tempest; and that strange unrest,  
Half manifest in inarticulate sound,—  
The voiceless bruit and menace of a crowd,—  
Hung as the sultry breath of summer hangs  
Before the lightnings of a rended sky.  
Facing the winds of gusty March, were men  
Long trained at foreign courts, the diplomats

Whose sophistry was soon to meet the sense  
Of one whose soul was riveted to truth,  
Nor knew evasion. Here were patriots, too,  
Waiting the word of him who came to lead  
A people out of bondage; and here, too,  
Were rebels panting to unloose the leash  
Which held the dogs of war.

And, towering high  
In that rude majesty which ever wraps  
The prophet like a mantle, Lincoln stood,  
And with uplifted hand and humble heart  
Made oath before the throne of God, and took  
Upon his valiant soul a people's woes.  
Where in the storied pages of the past  
Is writ the record of a mightier scene?  
And where among the uttered words of men  
Is found the pathos of a plea so deep  
As fell from those lips, trembling with the touch  
Of patriot zeal and yearning?

“Ah!” he cried  
“My fellow countrymen, men of this soil,  
Take heed lest passion lure you to despair.

This country with its institutions, all  
The blessings that our Heavenly Father showers,  
Is yours, the heritage of you who live  
Amid its hills and vales. Oh, let there be  
No bloodshed to make horrible the green  
Of its inviolate fields. With all the strength  
Within my being, I beseech you pause,  
Ere on the altar of our common land  
You lay destroying fingers. North and South,  
We all are one; we cannot separate.  
Take time to think; there can be nothing lost  
By that delay which but insures the right.  
It has been said that peace and property  
Throughout the South are menaced by the turn  
That brings a new Executive; 'tis false!  
I say, as often I have said before,  
There is no purpose,—no intent, direct  
Or indirect,—to interfere with that  
Peculiar Institution of the South,  
Within the States where now it does exist.  
I have no lawful right to interfere,  
Nor, if I had the right, have I the will.

Out of my heart I ask for your belief,  
You who are still dissatisfied. With you  
Must rest the issue of momentous war;  
The government will not assail you, nay,  
Will strain all patience to the utmost test  
Ere plunging into conflict. Pray you mark,  
You have no oath recorded in high heaven  
To break up and destroy the government,  
But I have registered before my God  
An oath to still maintain it. We are friends;  
We cannot, must not, be estranged. The ties  
Which bind us are unbroken. Mystic chords  
Of memory, stretching forth from patriot graves  
And far-off battlefields to living hearts  
And hearthstones over all this teeming land,  
Will yet the chorus of the Union swell,  
When touched again, as surely they will be,  
By better angels of our nature."

So

Lincoln the martyr closed, his frame convulsed,  
His high, ungainly shoulders bended down,  
Like Atlas bearing an ungrateful world.

Above his forehead leonine massed hair  
Hung as the aureole of a god in pain;  
And from the fountains of those earnest eyes  
Welled up the guerdon of unbidden tears.  
Then, for the answer to his high appeal,  
A ribald sneer ran through the listening throng;  
A thousand throats sent forth a jeer, that told  
The hate of treason grown most insolent.  
And Lincoln's mouth turned sadder for a smile  
More pitiful than weeping, and he held  
Outward his toil-worn hands. And from the crowd  
Came back the answer,—ribaldry and jeers.

## BOOK FOURTH



## BOOK FOURTH

### I

“Within an hour we open fire.” The words  
Were Beauregard’s last message to the man  
Shut like a solitary sentry left  
To hold a gate forlorn. The answer came,  
Prompt, firm, decisive; fearlessly as though  
The grizzled soldier, whose scant garrison  
Made a defense but mockery, held power  
To countervail attack: “We will not yield.”  
And even while the sun with later ray  
Kissed the upswelling folds of that dear flag  
Whose stars wrote liberty against the sky,  
The hour sped by, and over Charleston’s bay  
There roared the summons to a million sons  
To strike for God and country, roared the doom  
Of blatant treason arrogant and blind;  
And as the echo of the first gun died,

Hope fled with mobled head, and Fate cried out  
The sentence of a desolated South,  
And all the woes of ruin.

“They have dared  
To fire upon the flag!” So through the North—  
Leaped the wild words that made a people one,—  
Rang out the clarion call to loyal hearts  
To put aside all controversies, fears;  
To spurn the dalliance with a honeyed peace,  
And set stern faces to oncoming war.  
And even as the sturdy Anderson  
Endured the pounding of the rebel shells,—  
Even as, one by one, his magazines  
Rent with expiring crashes the soiled sky,  
Through every hamlet of an outraged land  
Thrilled the determination, now at last,  
To strangle treason, and with pitiless hand  
To crush the hissing serpent which had grown  
To vile maturity.

Now with strong thews  
The newly wakened giant bends to lift  
The burden on his shoulders. Nerves of steel

Quiver along a Nation's rounded limbs,  
And thrill with agony so near delight  
That pain is lost in ecstasy.

"The flag!

The flag is fallen at Sumter! Now by God!  
These men, who were our brothers, are our foes.  
These faithless children of our mother's womb,—  
These beings who preached honor while they stole,  
And whined of loyalty even as their hands  
Were steeped in treachery, and through the dark  
Groped to strike dastard blows,—these are henceforth  
The common enemy."

From Maine, whose front  
Faces the silent sunrise, to the sands  
That welcome evening in the Golden Gate,  
Such words and such avowal sweep abroad  
To render action vital. And amid  
The seething and commotion, one great soul  
Remains serene, though bent with sadness down;  
Continues self contained, though bowed before  
The coming desolation and the woe.  
Lincoln, whose anguished heart felt every pang

Inflicted on his bleeding country, fears  
Nor falters not at all. His call goes forth  
For men, for means, for loyal hearts to serve.  
And from the hills and valleys of the land  
Comes such response as only they may know  
Who, in the crisis of a Nation's life,  
Have marked a Nation's power. Ere the call  
Has echoed backward from New England hills,  
The streets of Boston throb beneath the tread  
Of Butler and his regiments. New York  
Springs to her arms. From Pennsylvania, quick  
To save the capital, the first troops pour  
Into defenceless Washington. And where  
Ohio spreads her sunlit fields, upspring  
Insistent thousands, begging for the right  
To serve their country. An upswelling cheer  
Greets the first bugle call. For every man  
That Lincoln calls for, ten demand the chance  
To serve beneath the colors so disgraced  
And flouted at Fort Sumter.

Up and down,  
Through cool-aisled forests and lone country roads,

O'er meadows greening in the April sun,  
Amid the roar of bustling city streets  
And clack of mill and factory, floats the lilt  
And loyal melody of such a song  
As patriot hearts conceive and bring to life:

"We are coming, Father Abraham,  
Six hundred thousand strong."

What though Kentucky fall to insolence,  
And Tennessee refuse her helping hand?  
What though Missouri seek to turn her back  
On that which her best citizens revere?  
'Twere easier to bear these shafts than see  
The sad decadence of Virginia,  
Mother of old time chivalry. And thou  
Fair Maryland, how hope and fear by turns  
Usurp our thoughts of thee!

Were it well done

When, through the sullen streets of Baltimore,  
The men of Massachusetts marched to reach  
The country's capital, that thy false sons

Should play assassin, and all cowardly  
Seek to shoot down the patriot soldiers sent  
To do a patriot's duty? Ah, no, no!  
Yet thou art saved at last, my Maryland,  
And still remain'st an unextinguished star.  
The South, whose hand hath cut the golden thread  
Which bound our hearts in love, no more holds place  
Within Hope's citadel. Alas! the line,  
Once but imaginary, now hath grown  
To be a yawning chasm. The Nation's ships  
Blockade the Southern ports; the Nation's troops  
Pour to the Southern border. From the staffs,  
Even at the gates of Washington, there flies  
The flaunting symbol of black treason, bold  
To rear a head defiant. 'Twas reserved  
For one brave man's strong hand to tear it down,  
And so, at Alexandria, to yield up  
A brave man's life.

'Twas thus that Ellsworth came  
To win the splendor of a patriot's grave,  
And garner fame immortal, garnering death.

## II

Galloping, galloping over the Southland,  
Horses as eager as riders for battle,  
Guns jarring heavy on lumbering caissons,  
Chains tugging hard at the rings of the traces;  
Up and down, up and down through all the Southland,  
Men pouring into the filling battalions,  
Companies forming and coming together,  
Tallied off quickly, compacted to regiments;  
Thousands on thousands of men from the cotton fields,  
Led into line by the broad-hatted planters,—  
Planters long-haired and unkempt, but with glittering  
Eyes, that shed forth the red glow of the smouldering  
Fires in their bosoms!

### From old Virginia

Comes the loud call to erect a new nation,—  
Comes proclamation that Richmond is chosen  
Capital city of slavery's stronghold,—  
City whose halls shall henceforward be dedicate  
Unto the uses of such a confederacy,  
Made up of sovereign States, as men of Southern blood  
Long have dreamed fondly of.

And ere the first demand  
Made on the elder lands, crosses the ocean,  
Friends of America,—friends in prosperity,—  
Turning to foes at the strife's earliest echo,  
Make preparation for prompt recognition;  
Hasten to stultify former professions  
Of faith in the human endowment of liberty,  
Hatred of slavery, blot on America's  
Blazoned escutcheon; hasten, almost ere asked,  
Willingly aid to grant, granting belligerent  
Rights to a section rebellious and passion-mad.  
France, the first friend of the struggling colonies;  
England, twice foe yet professèd well-wisher,  
Both alike reach to rebellion the weapons  
To aid in the Nation's destruction.

All Europe stands,  
Looking askance at the tortured Republic;  
Secretly hoping that, falling asunder,  
All that made mighty the rule of a people  
Worshiping freedom, should perish forever!  
Thus is the theory of bondage exalted  
Most by the lips that had feigned to deplore it;

And o'er the face of Atlantic's wide waters  
Float, in the tones of scarce-veiled exultation,  
Words which are bitter as aloes: "Democracy  
Is but a poor rope of sand!"

And so galloping,  
Horses as eager as riders for battle,  
Rushes to conflict a valiant people,  
Spurred by encouragement, cheered on by aliens,  
Blind to the fact that the envy of Tyranny  
Ever seeks Liberty's fall.

### III

Johnston, Beauregard and Longstreet,  
Heading columns clad in gray;  
Jackson, Kirby Smith and Early,  
Ewell, Elzey, Jones and Bee;  
Pushing onward their battalions  
In bewildering array,  
While the scouts of Holmes and Evans,  
Creeping back from tree to tree,  
Tell how Federal troops are coming  
With the coming of the day.

Concentrating on the turnpike  
Leading off to Centreville,  
Forming and again deploying  
Where the Stone Bridge, grim and gray,  
Sees the left flank of the Southrons  
Waiting in the dawn, as still  
As the forms of sculptured sentries,  
For the coming of the fray.

Through the air of early morning  
Comes the long and sullen roar  
Of a single rifled field-piece;  
And the Federal skirmish line,  
Pressing forward, gives scant warning  
Of the battery soon to pour  
On the ranks of Cocke and Bonham  
Rain of iron and steel. A fine  
Cloud of dust along the turnpike  
O'er the bridge at Sudley Ford,  
Tells the route the loyal column  
Moves upon to cross Bull Run,—  
Tells the story of the coming

Of the guns whose muzzles poured  
Challenge of Rhode Island's Second,  
While in fury, gun for gun,  
Splintering sound breaks through the woodland.  
Burnside's brave untried brigade  
Sweeps to front, then grows unsteady,  
Falling back on the reserves;  
Sykes's regulars, already  
Bracing each thin rank that swerves  
Through the bushes of Bull Run.

Heintzleman's division, sweeping  
Onward, bears the starry flag,  
Where the dogged Evans struggles  
To maintain his faltering line;  
While across the ford come creeping  
Sherman's men, till on the hill  
Two brigades, in line of battle,  
Move, as by a single will,  
Past the Henry house, and keeping  
To the stream's high bank, entwine  
In a stern embrace and deadly

The disordered troops of Bee,  
Who o'er fence and furrow leaping,  
In wild panic break and flee.

Onward come the blue battalions;  
Backward fall the men in gray;  
From the guns of Ricketts, Griffin,  
Roars a voice which seems to say:  
“All the Nation watch is keeping  
On the issue of to-day.”

Now as rearward seethes and surges  
All the mass of fear-struck men,  
Beauregard with Southern colors  
Strives to rally shattered lines;  
And Bee, turning as he urges  
Courage on his soldiers, cries:  
“Look at the brigade of Jackson;  
Like a stone wall there it stands!”

Prophecy is oft a mystery,  
And a chance word thus defines  
One whose name through future history  
Like a lifted beacon shines.

Once again the loyal legions  
Press the column as it flies;  
Once again a rain of iron  
Hurtles from the batteries.  
  
The brigades of Franklin, Willcox,  
Charge across the broad plateau;  
Stern the face of brave McDowell,  
Watching fortune come and go.  
  
Palmer's cavalry, in splendid  
Rank on rank, now turn and wheel,  
While the blue and gray seem blended  
In the flash and crash of steel.

In the hot and hazy waning  
Of the Summer afternoon,  
Comes the desperate final struggle.  
Fry calls Burnside to his aid;  
Howard every nerve is straining,  
While the long Confederate line,  
Reinforced from Johnston's army,  
Presses on the Federal guns.  
Now the rallied ranks are gaining;

Now a wave of panic runs,  
As the battery of Ricketts  
Falls to silence, and too soon  
Griffin, reft of every gunner,  
Must perforce remain supine.

And ere sinks the sun to slumber,  
Gray-clad soldiers hold the field,  
Where the dead the hillocks cumber,  
And war's horror stands revealed.

#### IV

Disaster and the crushing of fond hopes,—  
The turning sick at heart,—the ghost of fear  
Reaching its tenuous fingers, and despair,  
Not yet triumphant, but with velvet tread  
Nearing men's consciousness,—such forces filled  
The loyal atmosphere with many a dark  
And half-defined foreboding.

##### From Bull Run

There seemed to come the wail of Liberty,  
Struck down, all undefended of her sons.

The Union troops had fought with dogged strength,  
Yet, in the issue joined as if to test  
The skill and valor of the North and South,  
Arrayed alas! in hostile ranks, the day  
Was won by Southern dash, and such a zeal  
As bore the symbol of a riven land  
Up to the mouth of loyal guns, and spent  
Most noble blood in most ignoble cause.  
The blue-clad columns, dazed, were falling back  
On Washington. The wires were thrilling news  
To every hamlet of a waiting land  
That boded direful happenings, and fell  
Upon the Nation's hearing like a dirge.  
Was it indeed the truth that Southern men  
Possessed the fighting blood? That Northerners,  
Coarsened of commerce, could no more uphold  
The unsullied banner of a knightly name?  
A mighty people, humbled, answered No!  
Like waters rushing o'er a smiling plain  
When some faint flaw has broadened to a breach  
And left them unconfined, so leaped to war  
Unnumbered thousands, eager to retrieve,—

Determined to avenge. No longer now  
Were regiments refused. The flood swept on.  
Fort Hatteras surrendered and full soon  
The flag of Union fluttered from its staff.  
McClellan, whose auspicious star burned bright,  
Took from the willing hands of that untamed  
But age-encumbered lion, Winfield Scott,  
Command of troops about the Capital.  
September came, and with it came the tread  
Of stealthy treason luring Maryland;  
But ere the dark design could ripen, fell  
The mailed hand, preventing by arrest  
Assemblage of the legislators, so  
Saving a State from threatened suicide.  
Then came Ball's Bluff, a fight for field and fame;  
And gallant Baker, pierced by volleys, gave  
His true heart's blood to dye with richer hue  
The glorious stripes upon his country's flag.  
Port Royal yielded to the loyal will,  
And, with new energy, redoubled faith,  
The giant of the North shook free his locks,  
Girding anew his limbs for victory.

Yet Europe, ominous upon her thrones,  
Was evermore unfriendly. 'Twas in vain  
The Great Republic looked for moral aid  
From those who once professed a holy zeal  
To set the bondmen free. Commercial needs  
Outweighed the ethic call. The sordid mills  
Of Birmingham and Manchester set up  
The wail of mammon for the daily gorge  
Of raw material to feed the looms  
That made of Cotton king. And fired anew  
By hope enkindled through a foreign hint  
Of intervention, the Confederate States  
Strove to ingratiate, to plead, to fawn,  
That flattery, the handmaiden of Trade,  
Might make revolt triumphant.

So abroad  
The South despatched her emissaries, men  
Skilled in the use of diplomatic phrase,—  
Eager to grant the utmost favor asked,—  
Endowed with power to bind in solemn pact  
And smooth all dubious issues. On the *Trent*  
Sailed from Havana Mason and Slidell,

Bent on accomplishment of such a work  
At two proud courts, St. James and gay St. Cloud.  
And close upon the *Trent's* heels steamed in haste  
The *San Jacinto*, under the command  
Of Wilkes the patriot Commodore. Unused  
To idle parleys when quick action meant  
The triumph of the right, he stopped the *Trent*,  
Took prisoner the Southerners, and steamed  
Back to his country, where the men, interned  
Within Fort Warren's walls, might silently  
Reflect on life's mutations. Then there rose  
A cheer through all the North. The people felt  
Deep irritation at the quick desire  
Of England and of France to recognize  
The rebels as belligerents, and now,  
When England made imperious demand  
That men seized on her ship should be released,  
The irritation grew to passion deep,  
And bitterest resentment. Wilkes's deed  
Won the applause of all. The Congress passed  
A vote of thanks; the Navy's head extolled,  
And all the people praised him. Through the land

The cry went up of "No concession!" Wide  
Outspread the wave of popular demand  
For war before surrender.

But one soul

Remained serene; one well poised intellect  
Rose above passion as a mighty rock  
Rises above the sea. 'Twas Lincoln's hand  
Which stayed the fatal step; 'twas Lincoln's keen  
Unerring sense of right that lifted up  
The banner of consistency, and so  
Saved a distracted country from a leap  
Into disaster fraught with dire result.  
The South within its heart of heart rejoiced  
At such a turn of fate as should bring aid  
And firm alliance with a nation strong  
And on the sea predominant. To this  
The frenzied North was blind. But Lincoln saw,  
And in the homely phrase of common sense  
Said: "One war at a time. Did we not fight  
Great Britain once for doing this same thing  
Which our own Wilkes has done? These prisoners  
Must be surrendered." And his voice was heard  
By ears distraught with passion.

Thus again  
The wisdom of the patriot held on high  
The scroll whose legend was his country's weal.

V

How often hath the historic muse set down  
Words of profoundest import, which perchance  
The living hearers lightly dwelt upon,  
Lacking the knowledge born of later years!  
Lincoln the patriot, hating as he might  
The wrong of human chains, yet clearly saw  
And balanced all the equities. For him  
The prior duty was the primal call  
To save his country from disruption. Naught  
That could be said of moral issues, wrapt  
In the eternal question: "Bond or Free?"  
Could move that massive intellect or swerve  
That ever guiding hand.

"Our object now  
Is the firm maintenance of the Union. All  
Questions of slavery must bide their time,—  
Be settled in the light that Heaven shall shed  
When our first duty's done." So rang his words,

And so his facile pen, confirming, wrote:  
“I seek to save the Union,—that alone,—  
Neither to keep nor to destroy the slave.  
If I could save the Union now without  
The freeing of one slave, that would I do;  
If I could save the Union by the act  
Of freeing every slave, that would I do;  
If I could save the Union only by  
Freeing some slaves and leaving others bound,  
I would do that, and deem the action right.  
I shall do only that which helps the cause  
Whose life is part of mine.”

So from the fount  
Of a great spirit flowed the limpid stream  
Of patriotism, unalloyed with self.  
Statesman, not yet emancipator, he  
Nurtured within his heart of heart the twin  
Flowers of right and liberty. By such  
Deep wisdom, rising ever o'er the stress  
Of party passion and the moment's heat,  
States that yet wavered in the balance found  
At last their place within the Nation's home.

So was Kentucky held, and Maryland;  
And so Missouri, in despite of all  
The schemes of the destroyers,—held in place  
Within the Union arch. And from these three  
Came forty thousand soldiers, clad in blue,  
To fight beneath the stars.

And still to give

A touch of the heroic, Stanton came,—  
He of the iron will and stalwart breed,—  
Acrid, irascible, haply too quick  
To pluck the nettle of offence amid  
The flowers of good will, yet ever true  
In steadfastness of purpose to the aims  
Which were his high ideal. Ofttimes his mood  
Tried sorely the great President, who yet  
Knew well the pure gold 'neath the glittering steel  
Of the War Secretary,—knew and bore,  
In that long patience which a parent gives  
To a too petulant child,—bore silently,  
Or with a suasion gentle as the breeze  
Which bends a thorn bush on a day in June.  
And Stanton, holding stoutly to his own,

Grew first to listen, softening his wish  
To meet that other will, and finally  
Learned to accept the wisdom which, through all  
The darkness of the time, shone beacon-bright  
From Lincoln's towering mind.

Now from afar,  
Like to the faint notes of a bugle, borne  
Across the listening air, there floats a note  
Of Freedom's coming song. The law was made  
Prohibiting forever in the then  
Existing Territories, slavery.  
And so the second step to tear the roots  
Of bondage from the soil of liberty  
Was taken, while the lurid welkin rang  
With all the strident dissonance of war.

## VI

Down the road to Shiloh church,  
On a morn of early Spring,  
'Neath the trees where robins perch  
Sudden bullets sing.

Up the road from Shiloh church,  
Sherman's men, unfaltering,  
Through the mud and marshes lurch,—  
Into action swing.

Unsuspecting in his camp,  
Prentiss, with his tired brigade,  
Lies at rest beneath the damp  
Canvas colonnade.  
Comes the myriad-footed tramp,—  
Comes the gleam of rebel blade,—  
While the tethered horses stamp,  
Startled and afraid.

Tumbling out, the sleepy men  
Into line of battle form;  
Onward press the foe, and then  
Breaks the fiery storm.  
Crushed before that flood of men,  
In their motley uniform,  
Federals, numbering one to ten,  
Bow beneath the storm.

Soon, the foe on both his flanks,—  
Guns to left and guns to right,—  
Prentiss sees his shattered ranks  
    Breaking into flight.  
All are captured, and the banks  
    Of Lick Creek are covered quite  
With the decimated ranks  
    Telling of the fight.

Pittsburg Landing, where the lines  
    Of the Federal troops begin,  
Wakes to life as daylight shines  
    Through the battle's din.  
Grant, with steady voice, assigns,  
    As the regiments rush in,  
Troops to stay retreating lines,  
    Hoping yet to win.

Near the log house on the bluff,  
    Looking o'er the Tennessee,—  
Twenty pieces scarce enough,—  
    Frowns artillery.

Hurlbut, he of patriot stuff,  
With compacted infantry,  
Stands to meet the summons gruff  
Of the enemy.

Next McClernand, Sherman, come,  
Their divisions steadyng,  
While, with measured beat of drum,  
Wallace strives to bring  
Order to his cumbersome  
Mass of stragglers, rallying  
Round the colors, stricken dumb  
While the bullets sing.

Thus as sinks the saddened sun  
Far across the Tennessee,  
Half the bloody work is done,  
Half is yet to be.  
Grant growls: "I've only just begun;  
Though driven back, not whipped are we;  
The fight to-morrow shall be won;  
We'll have a victory!"

Sunday closes. With the dark  
Lew Wallace with five thousand men,  
Comes and glows the dying spark  
Of a hope again.

Monday dawns; and ere the lark  
Trills his welcome, marsh and fen  
See the opposing lines that mark  
Stern resolves as when

In the bright and buried past  
Greeks in burnished corselets, high  
Held aloft their shields, and cast  
Headlong, valiantly,  
Life and honor to the last  
On the field where, silently,  
Waging battle, furious, fast,  
Warriors fight and die.

Now the splendid corps of Buell  
Of the army forms the left,  
And with Johnston's right a duel  
Fights till nearly cleft;

And, disheartened by the cruel  
Death of Johnston, the bereft  
Southern legions fall as fuel  
Burned in warp and weft.

On the right the battle rages  
Through the long and bloody day;  
Crittenden the foe engages,  
Naught his hand can stay.  
Brave McCook, through all the stages  
Of the turbulent affray  
Writes his name on history's pages,  
Glorious for aye!

So was Shiloh lost and won,  
On those early April days,  
Where the river's waters run  
Neath the Western haze.

## VII

Spring blooms to Summer and the Summer wanes,  
And as the hectic glow of coming death  
Touches to strange new beauty whispering leaves,  
Nature seems hearkening to a message filled  
With mystic spiritual meanings.

So it was

That they who watched the heavy hand of Time  
Pass a rude palm across the patient face  
Of him who bore his country's burden, saw  
The presage of a season wherein peace  
Should come at last to dwell eternally.

The lines that marked those hollow cheeks were graved  
In deeper emphasis, and o'er the brow  
The shadow of a sadness grew divine  
In growing deeper human. The high stoop  
Of weary shoulders bent a little more;  
And such a light illumed those deep gray eyes  
As spoke of thoughts no man might know.

Perhaps

The memoried figure of Anne Rutledge passed,

In visioned loveliness, across his dreams,  
And scenes of old romance, like quaint conceits,  
May oft have mingled with the strenuous, stern  
And unrelenting problems of the war.  
So, in the darkest summer of his life,  
Did Lincoln hand in hand with Nature go,  
The while the carnage ceased not.

Then there came

September, big with fate and stained more red  
Than autumn's gorgeous touch might emulate;  
For o'er the page of history fell a name,—  
Antietam,—and the hearts of men stood still.  
Turn thy face, Mercy! Let thy pitying eyes  
No more behold the sodden fields of blood.  
Take cognizance no more of riven limbs,  
And wounds which from dumb mouths seem yet to cry  
Against the hell of conflict!

From beyond

Potomac's marshy banks Lee's legions came,  
While Hooker crossed Antietam, out of range,  
Then turning, swept into the field and formed  
His lines for battle, Ricketts on the left.

Meade with his Pennsylvanians strongly held  
The centre, while the guns of Doubleday  
Opened upon a rebel battery  
Which sought to enfilade the loyal line.  
Then darkness swept, like a swart mantle, down,  
And all the thousands of opposing men  
Slept on their arms till dawn.

At daylight came

The rush to action. Just beyond a wood,  
Across a plowed field that in Hooker's front  
Lay brown beneath the early Autumn sun,  
A battery pushed its devastating way  
To a sere cornfield, which, before the day  
Should sink to slumber, was foredoomed to be  
Soaked with America's best blood. Here Meade  
Was side by side with Ricketts, facing there  
The thin brigade of Lawton and the men  
Of Jackson's own division. Hooker's corps  
Hurled itself headlong on the rebel host  
Till Hood's division, coming up, brought hope  
To those who faltered.

Then the fresh brigades  
Of Gordon, Crawford, both of Mansfield's corps,  
Came to support the wavering Union line,  
And mid the crash of guns and rending scream  
Of shells which hurtled death along the air,  
The carnage held its sway, and brave men lay  
In awful heaps amid the serried corn.  
So wore the mad day to its bloody close,  
The while through streets of Sharpsburg rumbling went  
The carts and wagons improvised to do  
The ambulance's duty, laden each  
With its soul-sickening burden of dead flesh.  
Such was Antietam,—such the hideous tale  
Which, written in the page of history, makes  
And mars a scene of that wide drama whose  
Unfolding is the story of a world.

## **BOOK FIFTH**



## BOOK FIFTH

### I

How deeply rooted in the human breast,  
How firmly seated in the human soul,  
Is that large aspiration, unrepressed  
By any law, defying the control  
Of all tradition, love of freedom, whole  
Untrammeled and unchecked, which through the race  
Courses like life blood, levying its toll  
Of discontent divine, and o'er the face  
Of men the symbols of its presence quick to trace.

Sweet Liberty, what realms of joy are thine!  
What music marks the fall of riven chains!  
What light celestial o'er thy brow doth shine,  
Thou goddess of our country's hills and plains!  
Woe ever to the tyrant who disdains  
The lofty word thy lips articulate,  
And woe yet deeper to a land where reigns  
Enthronèd slavery, the fitting mate  
Of sin-conceived Rebellion and unreasoning Hate.

Long in the brooding bosom of the slave  
The seed of liberty had dormant lain;  
Long in a land of promise yearning gave  
An added sharpness to the dole of pain.  
Across the flag the sanguinary stain  
Of legal bondage bowed a Nation's head;  
Till those who loved America were fain  
To harbor hope, commingled oft with dread,  
That soon the curse should be forever banishèd.

Yet ever with an ordered motion flow  
The under currents of life's restless sea;  
The mind that made the law alone doth know  
How long fulfilment of the law's decree  
Shall wait on circumstance. But destiny  
Is thwarted never, and there comes at last  
The end that crowns the work, that law may be  
Supreme to-day as in the storied past,—  
Fixt as the hours when Fate her silent die hath cast.

Through mists of all the years since Lincoln saw  
His fellow beings bartered at the block,  
Had gleamed the light of God's eternal law,  
Impregnable and moveless as a rock  
That rears its head, nor ever recks the shock  
Of weltering waves, whose crested summits tower  
In hissing foam which serves to make a mock  
Of its own nothingness. Now came the hour  
To strike, for he who had the will had now the power.

Not hastily, but after labored thought,  
The great American saw clear the way,  
Stern logic of events at last had brought  
The line of duty to the light of day.  
No longer need that earnest spirit pray  
For guidance, since a word of high command  
Bade him go boldly on, nor longer stay  
The deed awaiting his obedient hand,  
That dowered with liberty a long defrauded land.

Thus in conjunction came the hour and man  
To strike from millions fetters which should be  
The future symbols of a tyrant's plan  
To thwart the uplift of humanity.  
Thus came the sword of righteousness to free  
Each base slave from a baser owner's will,  
Cleaving tradition that the world might see  
How outraged Liberty is potent still  
Her mission and her purpose ever to fulfill.

So Abraham Lincoln wrote his glorious name  
Beneath the proclamation which endowed  
The slaves with freedom and himself with fame  
More lasting than a Cæsar's, and more proud.  
Above the fleeting plaudits of the crowd  
The story of this deed, through all the years,  
Shall echo in reverberations loud  
And fill the measured music of the spheres,  
Touching with joy the memory of human tears.

## II

At Falmouth, where the Rappahannock runs  
Serenely smiling to the winter sky,  
The gallant Sumner massed his men and sought  
To cross to Fredericksburg, now occupied  
By Barksdale's Mississippi riflemen,  
Who, from behind the shelter of the walls  
Of buildings and of gardens, filled the air  
With the staccato of his sharpshooters,  
The while Lee's engineers upon the heights  
Reared hasty breastworks, seeking to repel  
The loyal gunboats steaming up the stream  
Near to Port Royal. Further up, the bluffs  
Leaned nearer where the river narrowed. Thence  
The guns of Burnside pounded on the town,—  
The stubborn town that hugged its treason close,—  
Till Fredericksburg was rid of Barksdale's gray  
And dust-begrimed sharpshooters, and the streets  
Echoed the tread of loyal feet once more.  
Upon the left was Franklin, pushing on  
To lay pontoons, o'er which the army passed,  
Filling the long hours of the sombre night  
With the low muffled sound of myriad feet,

Hasting to form in line of battle where  
The looming shapes of Lee's Confederate ranks,  
Full eighty thousand strong, in silence stood  
Awaiting the assault. There on the right  
The corps of Stonewall Jackson, firm, compact,  
Was fashioned for defense, while on the left  
Was Longstreet, heading long, thin lines of gray,  
As moveless as the shrubbery whose leaves  
Seemed listening for the call to bloody deeds.  
Now through the mist a sudden burst of sun  
Glinted upon the Union troops, whom Couch  
Led from the battered buildings of the town  
To capture Marye's Hill.

No braver men

Did ever smile on death than these who rushed  
Even to the base of that rude wall of stone,  
Behind whose shelter rebel batteries, masked,  
Belched forth the red hell of their cannonades.  
Alas! the heroic men of Hancock's corps  
Went down like grass before the reaper's blade;  
Alas! for those brave Irish hearts that beat  
Within the breasts of Meagher's bold brigade,  
Dashing itself again, and yet again,

Against the heights impregnable, until  
The thousands that had charged lay on the field  
With hearts that beat no more.

Then Hancock's corps  
Charged up the flashing heights, and French's men  
Rushed madly on the death which Barksdale dealt  
Unsparing from the safety of his wall.  
Howard's division, in support, and part  
Of the strong corps of Wilcox, held the rear,  
To keep communication with the town.  
And even as the day drew near its close  
The slaughter of brave men went madly on,  
And only night brought silence.

Such the price  
Which freemen pay for liberty! Such, too,  
The hideous toll of war when treason lifts  
A blood-stained hand to take a Nation's life  
In sateless rage. And such was Fredericksburg.

### III

Through the dark winter Victory held her scales  
At even balance, and, as dawned the Spring,

Each side was fain to flatter hope, nor yield  
To the deep craving for surcease of all  
The agonies of war. At Washington  
The Congress of the Nation, grown to know  
The depth of that great soul whose utter faith  
Made doubt impossible, in stern resolve  
Bended new energies, and cast aside  
All minor differences in the work  
Which yet remained to do. But still there lurked,  
Like poison adders hissing in the grass,  
Through all the straining North, the "Copperheads,"  
Intent to strike their coward blows where'er  
Shelter from harm made treason tenable.  
How wide the contrast with their brethren quick  
To meet the issue and face death like men  
Upon the Southern fields! Lee, moved to draw  
His sword by a misguided sense, yet true  
In every action of his manly life;  
Johnston and Longstreet, Stonewall Jackson, brave  
Unflinching soldiers fighting for a cause  
Made less ignoble by their valor,—these  
Stand forth as men, demanding from our minds  
The lofty judgment of a high ideal.

But they who, at the North, by word and deed,  
Sought ever to embarrass and destroy  
The government whose sustenance they sucked,—  
These serpents risking naught, but from the dark  
Spitting their venom in the hope to kill,—  
Deserve from human judgment only scorn,—  
The averted face of every honest man!  
Nor was there unanimity to seal  
And make efficient efforts of the North  
To enforce the Union's supremacy.  
Among the generals jealousy too oft  
Uttered insidious whispers.

More intent

To win the unearned plaudits of the crowd  
By claiming credit for another's act,  
Than to coöperate to bring about  
Results of greatest import, some of those  
Whose post of power should have instilled the thought  
Of high endeavor showed the petty wish  
For self aggrandizement.

And Lincoln's heart

Was heavy at the thought of victory lost  
Because of aid withheld. Nor did the time

Bring cheer to the great, loyal people held  
In a prolonged suspense. The Spring grew fair,  
And pipings of the birds made Nature glad,  
Despite the dirge of murder in the air;  
May-day was mild, when westward on the road  
From Chancellorsville the regulars of Sykes  
Marched cautiously, soon coming on a force  
Of rebel troops, who, in extended line,  
Strove to outflank them. Seeking to connect  
With Slocum's corps and failing, Sykes fell back,  
And when night came the men in blue and gray  
Alike were conscious that the dawning day  
Must bring the groaning harvest of red death  
To many a valiant soldier.

With the light

Came Sickles' corps from Fredericksburg, and soon  
Birney's division, pounding with its guns,  
Scattered confusion through Confederate ranks;  
Then charging, in its onslaught carried down  
All opposition, capturing at last  
A half a thousand prisoners. The day  
Wore on with varying fortune. Afternoon

Found Birney formed in hollow square, his guns  
Placed in the centre. Barlow's tried brigade  
Supporting well his right; but Whipple's Third,  
Relied on to support the left, came not;  
And while the Union leaders waited, keen  
To push success to victory, there rushed  
A horde of panic-stricken fugitives  
From the Eleventh Corps, in Birney's rear;  
And these bore tidings of disaster wrought  
Upon the First division,—Deven's men,—  
Caught unaware, and in an avalanche  
Of Stonewall Jackson's army swept away  
In awful wreck and havoc. Suddenly  
From out the thick woods poured the men in gray,  
Charging from three sides, sweeping to their doom  
Down the old road from Chancellorsville, in rout,  
Schurz's division,—rolling from their path  
Von Steinwehr's men, and spreading through the ranks  
Of all the Federal troops the panic bred  
By threat of a disaster unexplained.  
Sickles, with cavalry of Pleasanton  
Preparing for a charge, was quickly brought

To sense of his own danger, when he learned  
That Howard's corps was crushed, and in his rear  
The rebels were triumphant. There was one,  
One only thing to do; and Pleasonton,  
Turning to Major Keenan of the staunch  
Eighth Pennsylvania, gave his command:  
"A charge is needed. Take your regiment  
Into those woods, and hold the enemy  
At any cost till I can get my guns  
Into position."

Keenan said: "I will."

And, with his scant five hundred men, he charged  
Into the thirty thousand troops in gray,  
Checking them for a moment, till he fell,  
Dying a glorious death with duty done.  
Meanwhile the artillery of Pleasonton  
Made ready in the road to greet with shot  
The oncoming enemy, who from the woods  
Displayed the loyal flag, in hope to cheat  
The Union troops, upon whose frowning guns  
They waited but to charge. The subterfuge  
Availed but little, and at last they came

On, on, as burst to flame the gaping mouths  
Of cannon belching death, and piling high  
The roadway with the dead. And in that hell  
Fell Stonewall Jackson, wounded mortally,  
The bravest soldier in a cause forlorn.

#### IV

Few could see as Lincoln saw  
Clear the working of the law  
That America must be  
Welded close in unity.  
Not two peoples, one alone  
Could insure to Freedom's throne  
Permanence and power to draw  
Men to action. Such the law.  
In the East was Richmond, still  
Subject to a rebel will;  
In the West stood Vicksburg, frowning  
O'er the Mississippi, crowning  
With its black defiant guns  
Bluffs at whose green bases runs

That onsweeping, mighty stream  
On whose breast the flatboats gleam,  
Bearing fruits of industry  
Southward to the shining sea.  
Now throughout the waiting land  
Comes a summons and command,  
Comes a patriot message sent  
By a patriot President:  
“We must have, as have we shall,  
Richmond, treason’s capital;  
But so long as in the West  
Rebel strength is unrepressed,—  
While an alien power holds sway  
O’er our inland waterway,—  
We can never be as one,  
Moving on in unison.”  
Wise the words, and happily  
Time was ripe for wisdom; he  
Who from out the West had brought  
To his task the single thought  
To uphold his country’s cause  
And enforce her righteous laws,—

Grant, the silent, came to press  
Sternly onward to success.  
His the keen and careful plan  
When the boats of Porter ran,  
Past the flashing batteries,  
Lighting up the sombre skies,  
Past the forts of Vicksburg, on  
To the mounds of Warrenton.  
Then the transports, silently  
As a tide which seeks the sea,  
Under cover of the night,  
Floated, ere the morning light,  
Safe below the city, where  
Grant awaited them. With care  
Every move was made. Each day,  
Through the sunny month of May,  
Saw the lines more closely drawn,—  
Saw the coming of the dawn  
Which should usher in the day  
Of the rescued Union's sway.  
One by one the strongholds fell,  
Though the rebels fought full well.

Soon, above the state-house dome  
In the town of Jackson,—home  
Of a recreant State, the flag  
Of the Nation floated. Brag  
As they might of dare and dash,  
Southern soldiers, mid the crash  
And the ceaseless roar of guns,  
Where the Yazoo swiftly runs,  
Fled across the farms wherethrough  
Grant's converging lines of blue  
Pressed, and ever closer drew,  
Round the goal of long desire,—  
Vicksburg, city rimmed with fire.  
Shut in the beleaguered place,  
Pemberton, brought face to face  
With starvation, grim and gaunt,  
Long withstood the siege of Grant;  
Holding out, from day to day,  
While the gunboats kept their play  
Ceaselessly of shot and shell  
On the crumbling citadel.  
Less and less the rations grew,

While the Southern standard flew  
Through the lengthening days of June,  
Hoping for relief, yet soon  
Forced to ask for terms. So fell  
Treason's Western citadel,  
Carrying downward in its fall  
Rebellion's dearest hopes, while all  
The loyal North sent up a cry  
Of triumph and of victory;  
And lips devout found time to pray  
Upon the Nation's natal day.

## V

At Frederick lay the armies of the blue;  
At Hagerstown the gray. The intrepid Lee,  
As one who quenched at last a burning thirst  
To quaff from Northern beakers, gave command  
To enter Pennsylvania's wide domain.  
And now, at Chambersburg, his solid ranks  
Stood, waiting till his strong hand should unleash  
Their eager spirits for the coming fray

Which all felt hovering, like an imminent storm,  
Athwart the silent sky.

Then came the word  
To concentrate at Gettysburg. To Meade,  
Gallant and wise yet ever cautious, fell  
Supreme command of the great army, now  
Destined at last to conquer and retrieve  
Long wasted days of sickening delay  
And unexplained inaction. North and South,  
A sense intuitive, pervasive, strong,  
Filled every breast with knowledge that the hour  
Had struck for the decisive final test,  
Upon whose issue hung the mighty fate,  
Of a divided people. And as rose  
The reddened sun upon July's first day,  
The corps of Reynolds, marching through the town,  
Came unexpectedly upon the foe,  
Before whose heavy force he fell back, till  
The enemy, grown rash, advanced too far  
And quickly learned his error. But alas!  
The gallant leader, pressing to the front,—  
The patriot Reynolds,—garnered to himself  
The meed of noble death.

Then Howard reached  
The field of action and assumed command,  
Leaving his corps in charge of Schurz.

High up  
On Cemetery Hill, the men in blue  
Looked out upon the ranks of Ewell,—they  
Whom Stonewall Jackson had so often led  
To victory for the wrong. Once and again  
Repulsed, the gray line faltered and drew back;  
But at the last the rebels held the town;  
And as the sun declined across the hills,  
Each army sought in concentration, strength  
To meet the morrow's issue.

To the right  
Of Cemetery Hill, the Federals lay,  
In wide extension towards Rock Creek, beyond  
Whose whispering waters reared Wolf Hill.

The left  
Bent Westward, even to Round Top, on whose slope  
More blue battalions made a crescent, marked  
In sombre outlines. With the dark there came  
The Third and Twelfth corps, and ere night had  
reached

Its turning, Meade arrived upon the field,  
Quickly in order of battle placing all  
The troops at his command. Upon the right  
Was Slocum with the Twelfth.

The Third and Fifth,  
With Sickles in their forefront, held the left;  
While at the centre Hancock, like a rock,  
Stood at the head of all that war had left  
Of the brave First and Second. Howard, too,  
With the Eleventh, kept a line compact,  
Ready to shift at need to either wing.  
Along the crest of Cemetery Hill  
A hundred Union guns, in grim array,  
Looked down upon the field.

The morning broke,  
Yet those two silent hosts no movement made,  
But, like opposing lions, couchant, glared  
Each in the other's eyes. The morning sped  
To noontide, and the field was silent still;  
The noon, in shimmering heat, gave place to all  
The languor of a Summer afternoon;  
Yet no gun spoke. And Meade, who knew full well

The strength of his position, waited still  
The coming of the foe.

“They must attack;  
Be ready when they come.” So said the keen  
And ever cautious Meade. Then, as the day  
Wore on to longer shadows, suddenly  
A virulent mile of fire leaped into life  
Along the rebel line. The maddening roar  
Of field artillery, the answering scream  
Of hurtling shells, rended the Summer air;  
And from the skirts of Cemetery Hill  
A rain of iron death implacably  
Poured on the ranks of gray.

Then came the yell,—  
The Southern yell which fired the Southern blood,—  
And, sweeping in mad charge, the regiments,  
Brigades, divisions, dashed against the storm  
Of grape and canister, which never ceased  
Their awful hail of hell.

Up to the guns  
The withering gray lines pushed themselves, and like  
Sun-stricken snow, melted to nothingness.

The Federal gunners by the hundreds fell  
Beside their pieces, but yet others came  
To serve the guns and die.

Again, again,  
The rebel hosts were shattered and hurled back;  
The men in blue across their piled-up dead  
Loaded and fired and fell. Yet onward came  
The Southern thousands, while, stern man to man,  
American fought with American,  
Acrid, unyielding, strong!

Across the fields  
Pressed Longstreet, Pickett, Hood, McLaws and Heth,  
Dashing their legions against Hancock's ranks,  
Upreared like rocks that balked a seething sea.  
And Hancock, wounded, through his anguish laughed,  
As to the muzzles of our batteries  
The graybacks fought their way, and still were struck  
Down to the sodden earth by loyal arms.  
Now Sickles from the front was borne away  
Desperately wounded, and as victory seemed  
Hung in the balance, Sedgwick's gallant corps,  
Weary with marching but undaunted still,

Swept like an avalanche upon the field,  
Crushing the foe back on his crumbling lines.  
Now upon Slocum on the right there came  
A sudden dash by Early; but again  
The Northern veterans, like giants, hurled  
Rebellion back and triumphed.

So the day,—

The bloody second day of Gettysburg,—  
Drew to its awful close; and on the field  
Unnumbered thousands lay in hideous heaps,—  
The dead and dying,—in a mute appeal  
To human dread and pity.

With the dawn

Again the guns of Longstreet roared abroad  
Their challenge of defiance, and again  
The blue lines swung to action. Slocum rushed  
With splendid vigor upon Early; Sykes  
Pushed his division up, and Humphreys' corps  
Swooped upon Stonewall Jackson's men, who soon  
Were driven backward. But ere yet the day  
Had ripened to its fulness, all at once  
Lee hurled the whole strength of his army straight

On Cemetery Hill. His hundred guns  
Poured their concentric fire upon the massed  
And wearied blue battalions. Through the air  
The riven rocks and upturn earth were hurled;  
The trees went down before that blast, and men  
And horses fell about their guns. Then came  
The answering artillery, till far  
Across the green miles of the ruined farms  
The echoes shrieked of war.

Now Pickett charged  
In mad abandon on our infantry  
Along the road which led to Emmettsburg;  
And Gibbon with his Second Corps stood fast,  
Waiting the impact. "Hold your fire," he cried.  
"They're not yet near enough." And even as  
He spoke, the rebel steel flashed in the sun  
Close to our rifle-pits. "Now fire." A blaze  
Of death flamed down the line,—the long, curved  
line,—  
Of that brave Second Corps; and Pickett's men  
Reeled, shattered, back to waiting death, and broke  
In wild confusion. Those who in retreat

Saw but the end of all, threw down their arms,  
Surrendering by the thousands. Then there came  
A panic spreading through the Southern host;  
Whole regiments surrendered. On the field,  
Amid the dead and dying, lay the arms  
Discarded by defeated men, who chose  
Surrender as a welcome refuge.

Thus

Was fought and won the bloodiest battle known  
In all the records of this Western world;  
And as the remnants of Lee's army crossed  
Once more the wide Potomac, in his soul  
He must have heard the knell of Southern hopes,  
Even as the elated hearts of loyalists  
Acclaimed fruition in acclaiming Meade.

## VI

In bleak November, standing on that field  
Heroic in the annals of the world,  
A patriot spoke the words of prophecy,  
A prophet worshiped at his country's shrine.

And as across the dim dismantled farms  
Chill Autumn sighed, the unremembering winds  
Bore on their wings the message of a seer  
To the remembering years:

“Our fathers here,  
Four score and seven years ago, brought forth  
A Nation new, conceived in liberty,  
And dedicated to the truth that all  
Men are created equal. Now we wage  
A mighty civil war, to test the strength  
Of such a Nation. On this battlefield  
We meet to dedicate a resting place  
For those who here gave up their lives that we  
Might, as a living people, still endure.  
Our act is fit; but in a larger sense  
We cannot consecrate or hallow ground  
Already hallowed by the imperial dead,—  
They who in struggling here have set their deeds  
So far above our praising. ’Tis for us  
To dedicate to the unfinished work  
Ourselves, in dear devotion to the dead,—  
Heroic souls who in a holy cause

Gave the last measure of a patriot's love.  
Let us find here our duty. Let us here  
Highly resolve that they who on this field  
Breathed out their lives, shall not have died in vain,—  
That our loved Nation, under God, shall have  
New birth of freedom, and that government  
Of, by, and for the people, shall not cease  
Or perish from the earth.”

And Lincoln’s voice,  
In tones which told of tears, became the wraith  
Of music falling off along the breeze,—  
A melody to fill the souls of men,  
Wrapt in the mantle of the silences.



## **BOOK SIXTH**



## BOOK SIXTH

### I

Vicksburg and Gettysburg! How thrill the names  
Within the porches of the ears long strained  
To catch the first notes of victorious peace!  
Till now hope long deferred had sickened hearts  
Filled with the love of home and native land;  
Till now a fratricidal contest brought  
Results but indecisive. But at last  
Men knew the tide had turned; for Grant and Meade,  
Hurling rebellion back to feed its spleen  
Upon the offal of its own chagrin,  
Set bounds forever to the onward sweep  
Of Lee, whose boast had been that Southern steel  
Should sweep the spoil of Pennsylvania farms,—  
A boast well amplified by threats which fell  
From the thin lips of Davis, grown apace  
In insolence and malice. “Soon,” he cried,

"We'll carry war where sword and torch may glut  
Their appetite within the densely packed  
Great cities of the North."

But Fate, that holds  
A scale whose dipping no man may foresee,  
Ruled otherwise. With Vicksburg captured, all  
The taint of treason that had soiled the air  
Where the great Mississippi seeks the sea,  
Was blown away, and rebel territory  
Severed in twain forever. In the West  
Rebellion's power was broken. In the ranks  
Of a free Nation's army now there served  
A hundred thousand freedmen, whose dark skins  
No longer bore the brand of slavery,  
And in whose hearts dwelt gratitude, and all  
The new lit fires of liberty. Then came  
"The Rock of Chickamauga,"—Thomas,—brave  
To save an army, and snatch victory's flower  
From shadows of defeat. Grant, silent, stern,  
Assumed command at Louisville, and brought  
The tempered power of an iron will  
To render action vital. Up the heights

Of Lookout Mountain Sherman's forces charged,  
And from the end of Missionary Ridge  
Hurled down destruction on a fleeing foe.  
Hooker, impetuous, drove the Southern host  
Far up the western slope, and through the woods  
Sent scurrying, panic struck, the broken ranks  
Of rebel regiments. The next day saw  
The army of the Cumberland assail  
The field works grouped on Missionary Ridge,  
And at the bayonet point sweep out the men  
Who, under Bragg, had fought in gallant style  
To save a waning cause. To Tunnel Hill  
The dauntless Thomas now pursued and fought  
Again the harassed Bragg, while Burnside met  
And, with the help of Sherman, backward turned  
The men of Longstreet, who in swift retreat  
Seeking Virginia, left Tennessee  
In full possession of the Union arms.  
Thus came relief to those enduring souls  
Whose loyalty no persecution balked,  
When in the mountains of their Western homes  
They dwelt without protection from the land  
Whose flag they dearly loved.

And Lincoln saw

As in a glass of fate the glimmering dawn  
Spread, like a hint of coming joy, across  
The silent slumbering hills. A prescience filled  
The chambers of his brain, and through his dreams  
Wove pictures, haply born mysteriously  
In that large spiritual nature,—knit perchance  
Into the fabric of to-day's events,  
Even as the imagination of a seer  
Colors all prophecy to make it real.

“I have a dream that comes and comes again,  
Asleep or waking,—in the night, the day,—  
I know not whence it comes, or what should bode  
Its strange persistence and the vividness  
Of its appearing. It is of a ship,  
With canvas set and bellying in the wind,—  
A ship fast sailing to an unknown port,—  
Freighted with hope; with helm held hard and bow  
Leaping across the foam.”

So spoke the man

Whose rugged hand guided the ship of State,—  
Whose human heart bled with a people's woes  
And bore a Nation's burden.

## II

Onward swept  
The tide of victory. Yet no great deed  
Reaches fruition unalloyed of toil  
And sweat of bended brows.

The call went forth  
For men to carry forward to the end  
The country's vital struggle, and so crush  
Into the ashes of its baleful fires  
Rebellion's hateful form. The draft became  
The unavoidable recourse of war,  
And States and people bowed, save in New York  
Whose unavailing riots did but blot  
The 'scutcheon of a city, proud and rich  
Yet swarming with the men of foreign birth  
And fire-bred fugitives from a rebel South,  
Who had not learned the patriot's creed. To these  
Were joined that horde of coward souls whose name,  
The "Copperheads," sounded in honest ears  
Like some fell serpent's hiss,—beings too mean  
To venture worthless lives in any cause,

Yet prone to blatant mouthings safe at home,  
And, like assassins crawling in the dark,  
Seeking to stab a mother in the back,  
The while they shared her bounty.

But the wheels  
Of destiny could not be blocked by hate,  
Nor Freedom's cause be thwarted of its goal;  
And as Time turned the page, another year  
Saw a united North more firmly set,—  
More solidly determined than before,—  
To save the Union and forever blot  
Treason and slavery from the records marred  
By blood-stained fingers.

Now the time was ripe  
To incorporate in the fundamental law  
The prohibition of the right to hold  
Black men in bondage, throughout all the length  
Of a land dedicate to liberty.  
So was Emancipation made complete,  
And so was Lincoln justified.

Meanwhile  
Grant, called to the Potomac, came to take

Into his vigorous hands the threads left loose  
By Meade, who faltered on the heels of fate,  
And, after victory gloriously won,  
Failed strangely to crush Lee, who crossed again  
The broad Potomac to his former lines.

Upon the soil of old Virginia stood  
The ranks of long opposing armies, each  
Seasoned to war's mutations. Grant and Lee  
At last were face to face; the hero one  
Of Vicksburg and the storied Western fields;  
The hope the other of a militant South,  
Weakened but still unconquered.

#### As the Spring

Ripened to Summer, came the clash of steel,—  
The rending of the air with deadly fire.  
The Rapidan was crossed, and followed fast  
The bloody battles of the Wilderness.  
At Opequan the gallant Sheridan  
Drove Early from the field, and following  
Even to the Blue Ridge passes, ravaged all  
The fruitful valley, leaving desolate  
The one time smiling fields. But Early crossed

Again the mountains, and the Federal troops,  
Retreating in confusion, made a stand  
At Middletown, from whence the voice of guns  
Reached Sheridan at Winchester.

Like light

He rode in furious haste, and to the field  
Brought such magnetic presence as inspired  
Each man with double courage, and insured  
The quick repulse of Early, who was fain  
To flee with broken ranks.

So came the end

Of war in Shenandoah Valley; so  
Rose to the stature of a hero he  
Whose sobriquet became a shibboleth:  
“Cavalry Sheridan.”

Now Sherman drew

His lines about Atlanta. Towards the sea  
He bent his soldierly, adventurous eyes.  
“We cannot stay,” so wrote the hero of historic deeds,  
“Upon the mere defensive. I prefer  
To make a wreck of roads and country here,  
From Chattanooga to Atlanta, then

Send back my wounded, and through Georgia move  
With an effective army to the sea.  
War, which is hell, cannot be delicate;  
I must move, smashing all things, to the sea.”  
And Grant, more cautious, yet demurred, but soon  
Gave Sherman all his will, and Sherman cast  
His fortunes in the balance, cutting all  
Communications in his rear, and so  
Marched onward to the sea.

Then Farragut,  
While thus the Union arms on land bore high  
A laureled victory, seized upon Mobile,  
His vessels sweeping down, unmindful how  
Torpedoes barred the way. Thus history grew  
Into romance, and on Time’s tablets wrote  
The record of imperishable deeds.

### III

Amid the roar of war is heard the voice  
Of civic duty, calling through the land  
The approaching termination of the rule

Of him on whom the people set their hopes,—  
Of him whose heart the people knew was true,—  
Whose staunch integrity and loyal faith  
No one could call in question. East and West  
The stern demand was made that none but he  
Should be entrusted with the Nation's fate,—  
That none but he should consummate the work  
Begun by him and by his wisdom brought  
In sight of fair fruition. Some there were,  
Inspired by ignorance, envy, or the zeal  
Which ever advocates a change, who strove  
To nominate some stranger to lead on  
The hosts of Union to the wished-for end.  
Such men as Greeley, honest in intent,  
But easily beguiled, and overfond  
Of lending ear to his own vain conceits,  
Puffed with a reputation grown beyond  
The sum of his deserts. Such men as Chase,  
Disloyal to his chief, while doubtless true  
To what he deemed the right. Such as Fremont,  
Hot-headed in a righteous cause, but prone  
To strangle prudence with publicity.

These men and many more made argument  
Against renomination of the man  
To whose sagacity and splendid zeal  
The Nation owed its life. But all in vain  
The opposition strove to drown the call  
Of a free people for the trusted chief  
Who dwelt within the hearts of all who held  
Country above ambition.

Thus the choice  
Fell once again on Lincoln. Once again  
He stood upon the Eastern portico,  
Where, in the mists of a departed hour,  
He plead for peace, and, holding forth gaunt hands,  
Implored his wayward countrymen to pause.  
They heeded not, but, answering with jeers,  
Plunged into battle, proud and arrogant,  
Full of the overconfidence which breeds  
The seeds of its undoing.

Through the stress,  
The awful murderous stress, of those four years,  
America had agonized, and care  
Had writ deep lines on Lincoln's homely face.

The maddened South had driven deep its crime  
Into its own torn entrails, and to-day  
Stood, like a desolated temple, reft  
Of all that once was beauty.

From the throng

Now burst a mighty cheer; from throats grown dry  
With fever came the faint pathetic note  
Of those whom weeks in crowded hospitals  
Had left but wrecks of men.

On crutches came

Hundreds of soldiers, maimed, to serve the cause  
And fight the fight of freedom; and anon  
An eager light stole piteously athwart  
The faded eyes of men who soon must die  
Of dread disease of camp and swampy field,  
Who yet would die the happier to have seen  
The saviour of his country.

Lifting up

His face, whereon emotion lambent played,  
Lincoln made sign for silence, and his lips  
Uttered the message that was half a prayer.  
He showed the purposes which rashly led

The insurgents into action; how at first  
The government sought but to set due bounds  
To slavery's extension,—not at all  
To banish it; how, by their own mad act,  
The people of the South had forced the end  
Of slavery forever.

“Ah!” he cried,  
“The Almighty’s purposes are all His own.  
Woe to the world because offences come.  
Offences needs must come, but woe to him  
By whom the wrong is wrought. Shall we suppose  
That slavery, which haply needs must come,  
Hath brought the woe of war to North and South?  
Fondly we hope, as fervently we pray,  
That this grim scourge of war may pass away;  
Yet if God wills that it continue till  
The wealth piled up by all the centuries  
Of unrequited labor shall be sunk,—  
Till every drop of blood drawn by the lash  
Shall be repaid by one drawn by the sword,—  
So still it must be said, as ’twas of yore,  
The judgments of the Lord are ever true  
And righteous altogether.”

Then in tears,  
Vibrant with all the passion of a seer:  
“With malice,” spoke the prophet, “towards none;  
With charity for all; with firmness in  
The right, as God gives us to see the right,  
Let us complete the work that we are in.”  
When he had ended, the upswelling cheer  
That rose, fell off to silence, checked by awe  
Too deep for human bearing; and adown  
The gusty colonnades and broad arcades  
Of the vast capitol, an echo rang  
Heard yet to-day: “With charity for all.”

#### IV

Yea, and the time made bitter call for all  
The strength of human wills, to keep the faith  
With scorned humanity’s most stern commands.  
From Libby Prison came the rending cry  
Of Union soldiers, scourged to tasks, and galled  
With chains more bitter than the clutch of death.  
The outraged face of Mercy turned away  
From all the horrors of Fort Pillow; while

At Andersonville carnival went on  
To please the bloody fancies of a fiend.  
Then in the Senate rose the sturdy Wade,  
Demanding that retaliation be  
Forthwith resorted to. But Sumner's voice  
Was firm for righteousness. And Lincoln spoke,  
Out of his human heart, those words of gold:  
"I cannot starve and murder men, though all  
The malice of our foes should goad us on.  
Two wrongs have never made a right, and we  
Must follow conscience even to the end."

Now, as the glimmerings of coming peace  
Greatened to dawn, the mind of Lincoln dwelt  
On reconstruction of the edifice  
So rudely shocked by war. The Union stood,  
Yet from a smoking, desolated South  
Came glimpses but of ruin. Every State  
Still in rebellion must be organized  
Under a new and loyal government.  
Obedience first, then restoration to  
The rights of citizenship, and once again

Admission to the councils of the land.  
The mighty task which now a mighty mind  
Essayed to carry to completion, was  
The rearing of the torn Republic's fane,  
The restoration of a temple fair  
In all its pristine beauty.

Yet once more

There came the call to battle. Lee was camped  
Beside the Appomattox, while there drew  
An ever closing circle of blue ranks,  
Upon whose banners victory sat to cheer  
Each loyal soul to action. Grant was there,  
Silent and confident, his veterans  
Eager to make an ending of the foe.  
Sherman, whose lines of eighty thousand men  
Sought but to form the junction which should force  
All opposition down, watched eagerly  
The coming of the end; while Sheridan,  
Earnest, alert and rapid, marched to seize  
Lee's only avenue of exit. Thus  
A fustian Confederacy was brought  
To its last gasp of life. Lee, ever brave,

Held out, but warned his chief that Petersburg  
And Richmond too must fall.

Then Davis fled,  
A pitiable object, symbol fit  
Of treason decked in fear's habiliments;  
And at the dawning of another day  
The Union cavalry possession took  
Of Richmond, and upon the state-house raised  
Once more the old flag,—the unsullied stars  
And waving stripes of freedom.

But for Grant  
A greater goal lured onward. Then and there  
He vowed to "end the matter." Pushing on  
Up one side of the Appomattox, Ord,  
Leading the valiant army of the James;  
Grant on the other, and with Sheridan  
Scouring the ground in front, no hope was left  
For the intrepid Lee. Through weary years  
He had endured the grinding strains of war,  
And in a cause unrighteous ever held  
The path of righteous action. Now he saw  
The inevitable end, and, stung to tears,

Bore manly sorrows with a dignity  
Befitting manhood in its best estate.  
Yielding to Grant his sword, he bore away  
The fragrance of a character unstained,  
The while his conqueror, large-hearted, broad,  
Gave generous terms, exacting naught that held  
The savor of dishonor.

So the sun

Which shone on Appomattox, lit the fires  
Of patriot exultation, for all knew  
Rebellion died upon that April day,  
And once again the Union was supreme.  
Meanwhile, the patient Lincoln, lifting eyes  
Of thankfulness to that Almighty power  
Whose presence was his bulwark, came to tread  
The dreary streets of Richmond, looking long  
Upon the walls of Libby and the marks  
Of desolation and the finger-prints  
Of bloody-handed war.

The negroes flocked

To see him, hear him speak, haply to touch  
His garments who, like a Messiah, came,

Bringing deliverance and the gift of life;  
Kissing the hand whose act had set them free,  
Blessing the saviour whose redemption brought  
The life of liberty to souls long crushed  
Beneath the weight of serfdom.

Through the North,—

The iron-willed, indomitable North,—  
Ran the electric joy, the deep content  
That comes of great accomplishment.

The land

Once more was liberty's, once more was free  
And dedicate to justice. From the South  
The sound of crumbling armies, like a dirge,  
Came fitful on the balmy winds of Spring;  
And echoes of dire desolation died  
Amid the anthem chords of victory.

V

Ring out, ye bells!  
From factory, tower and steeple,  
Ye bells that call to daily toil

The thews and sinews of a mighty people;  
Ye bells whose long, reverberant echo swells  
Through lattices where moss and ivy coil  
Cool fingers mid the stones;  
Ye bells that utter the muezzin call  
Translated to the language of the Christ;  
Ring out in ecstasy to one and all  
Peace, whose soft touch forever hath sufficed  
To silence sorrow's moans.

Oh! Mother-Land, how agonized have been  
The torture and the travail of thy days!  
What hideous sights thine outraged eyes have seen!  
What blood hath smeared the verdure of thy bays!  
And 'mid thy laurel the commingled rue  
Hath spread the gloom of a funereal shade,  
Till thou, whose lips were fashioned to command,  
Hast, of thy mother-love, been forced to sue,  
Lest thine infuriate children, undismayed,  
Should drench a sorrowing land  
With one another's blood. How from thy view  
Have patriots passed to judgment! How

Have they held high their colors and gone down  
In glorious pageantry of mailed death!  
Alas! that for the crime of slavery thou  
Shouldst be condemned to wear a martyr's crown,  
Listening with bated breath  
To the long roll-call of thy martial dead!  
Yet is the end accomplished. Even now,  
'Mid the low requiem of thy muffled drums,  
A deep exultant cry,  
Born on the rounded lips of Victory, comes,—  
Life's music woven through a threnody,  
Like an immortal joy!  
War is a spectre fled;  
Rebellion, as a dragon in the throes  
Of a last agony, through all the South  
Lashes the dust of desolation's woes,  
And from its fetid mouth  
Spits forth the poison fated to destroy  
Itself in its own infamy.  
At Appomattox the strong hand of Grant  
Crushed out the life of treason. Gallant Lee  
Surrendered with his legions the last plea

For human bondage and the right of States  
To sovereignty supreme. Now at the gates  
    Of a free Nation's capital we plant,  
Unsullied still, the free flag of the people.  
    So ring out, ye bells!  
From factory, tower and steeple  
    The victory whose echo proudly swells;  
        And, as the dissonant war-cries slowly cease,  
Far over suncapped hills and greening dells  
    Fling forth your word of peace.

Yet toll, ye bells!  
Down all the arches of the lonesome sky  
    Pour forth the message of a murdered joy!  
And even as the victor's song foretells  
    Peace that nor hate nor malice may destroy,  
        Weave through the cadence, as it upward swells,  
The echo of a long heart-broken sigh  
    Wrung from an anguished people.  
Toll, ye bells, from factory, tower and steeple,  
In tones made eloquent of garnered woe,

Divinely fashioned by the hand of Grief,  
Utter the sadness which they only know  
Whose every flower is plucked from sorrow's sheaf;  
For he is dead who loved his country so,—  
Our leader and our chief!

With new light dawning in his saddened eyes,  
With new joy in his ever steadfast soul,  
Lincoln the patriot saw at last the prize  
Gleam with the glory of a patriot's goal.  
And even in that moment crafty death  
Stole on him in a murderous madman's guise,  
And he who saved a Nation, in a breath  
Was one with God's immensities.  
Ah, Fate inscrutable! Was there no life  
Other than his to yield itself to thee?  
Was there no other heart to still its strife  
And end its being at thy stern decree?  
Dear God! That he who bore a people's woes,—  
A man of sorrows bending 'neath his cross,—  
Should, at the moment of his blest release  
From the deep anguish which a patriot knows

In presence of his bleeding country's loss,  
Meet death's dark midnight at the dawn of peace,—  
Endure the thorns amid the bitter dross,  
Yet miss at last the rapture of the rose.

Then toll, sad bells!  
In falling minor tones o'er sun-kissed fields,  
In dying strains far over dreamy hills,  
Through all the pulsing life of cities, bent  
Upon the rich rewards which effort yields,  
O'er trodden street and meadow flower besprent,  
Sound the despair which, like a requiem, stills  
The song of exultation, and dispels  
The flush that victory lent.

Toll, solemn bells!  
Through dim evanished years  
We seem to catch the echo of your tones,  
And standing where no note of discord mars  
The melody of life, to hear the moans,—  
The piteous drip of tears,—  
Preluding Victory's pæan, which foretells  
Immortal music sung among the stars.





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